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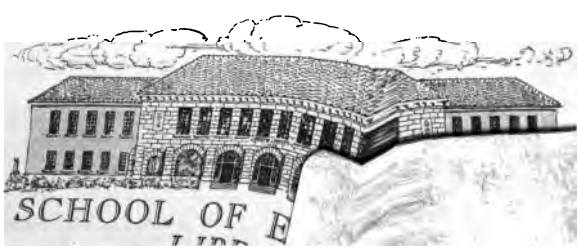

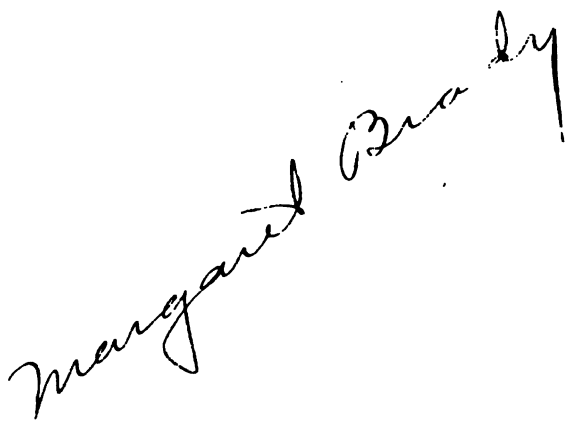

THE MAYFLOWER

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MEXICO IN REVOLUTION

In Preparation

THE ARGONAUTS

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THE MAYFLOWER

(FLOR DE MAYO)

A TALE OF THE VALENCIAN SEASHORE

BY

VICENTE BLASCO IBAÑEZ

TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH
BY
ARTHUR LIVINGSTON

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THE MAYFLOWER

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CHAPTER I

THE WIDOW'S TAVERN

THE morning of that day—it was a Tuesday of the Lenten season—could not have dawned more promisingly. The sea, off the Cabañal, was in flat calm, as smooth as a polished mirror. Not the slightest ripple broke the shimmering triangular wake that the sun sent shoreward over the lifeless surface of the water.

The fishing fleet had headed, bright and early, for the grounds off the Cabo de San Antonio; and all the seines were out to take full advantage of the perfect weather. Prices on the market of Valencia were running high; and every skipper was trying to make a quick catch and get back first to the beach of the Cabañal, where the fisherwomen were waiting impatiently.

Toward noon the weather changed. An easterly wind came up, the dread *levante,* that can blow so wickedly in the gulf of Valencia. The sea at first

was lightly wrinkled; but as the hurricane advanced the placid looking-glass gave way to a livid menacing chop, and piles of cloud came racing up from the horizon and blotted out the sun.

Great was the alarm along shore. In the eyes of those poor people, familiar with all the tragedies of the sea, wind from that quarter always meant one of those storms that bring sorrow and mourning to the homes of fishermen. In dismay, their skirts whipping in the blow, the women ran back and forth along the water's edge, wailing and praying to all the saints they trusted. The men at home, pale and frowning, bit nervously at the ends of their cigars, and, from the lee of the boats drawn up on the sand, studied the lowering horizon with the tense penetrating gaze of sailormen, or nervously watched the harbor entrance beyond the Breakwater on whose red rocks the first storm waves were breaking. What was happening to so many husbands and fathers caught with their nets down off shore? Each succeeding squall, as it sent the terrified watchers staggering along the beach, called up the thought of strong masts snapping at the level of the deck and triangular sails torn to shreds, perhaps at that very moment!

About three o'clock on the black horizon a line of sails appeared, driving before the gale like puffs of foam that vanished suddenly in the troughs of the waves to dart back into view again on the crests

succeeding. The fleet was returning like a frightened herd in stampede, each boat plunging in the combers with the bellow of the tempest upon its heels. Would they make the lee of the Breakwater? The wind in devilish playfulness would here tear off a shred of canvas, there a yard, and there a mast or a tiller, till a rudderless craft, caught abeam by a mountain of greenish water, would seem surely to be swallowed up. Some of the boats got in. The sailors, drenched to the skin, accepted the embraces of their wives and children impassively, with vacant and expressionless eyes, like corpses suddenly resurrected from the tomb.

That night was long remembered in the Cabañal.

Frenzied women, with their hair down and lashing in the hurricane, their voices hoarse from the prayers they shouted above the howling gale, spent the whole night on the Breakwater, in danger of being swept off by the towering surf, soaked with the brine from the biting spray, and peering out into the blackness as though bent on witnessing the lingering agony of the last stragglers.

Many boats did not appear. Where could they be . . . *ay Diós, Diós!* Happy the women who had their sons and husbands safe in their arms! Other boys were out in that tumbling hell, driving through the night in a floating coffin, tossing from white cap to white cap, dizzily plunging into the yawning trough, while decks groaned beneath their feet, and

gray hills of water curled above to break down upon them in a destroying surge!

It rained all night long. Many women waited out till sunrise, drawing their soaked cloaks about their shivering bodies, kneeling in the black mud and coal-dust on the Breakwater, shrieking their prayers to be sure that God would hear, or, again, in desperate rage, stopping to tear their hair and hurl the most frightful blasphemies of the Fishmarket up toward heaven.

And when dawn came, what a glorious dawn it was! As if nothing at all had happened, the sun lifted a smiling hypocritical face above the line of a clean horizon, and spread a broad uneasy glitter of golden beauty over waters that peacefully carried long streaks of foam from the night's turmoil. The first thing that the rays of morning gilded was the battered hulk of a Norwegian barkentine ashore off the Beach of Nazaret, its nose buried in the sand, its midships awash, its bilges agape and in splinters, while strips of canvas floated from the rigging tangled about the broken masts.

The ship had carried a cargo of Northern lumber. Pushed gently along by the lapping waves, timbers and boards were slowly drifting ashore, where they were dragged out by swarms of black ants and disappeared as though sunk in the sand. And they worked hard, those ants. The storm was just what they had been waiting for. Beach-pirates were

whipping up their horses gayly along all the roads leading to the *huerta* of Ruzafa. Boards like that would make such fine houses! And the booty was all theirs by rights! What did it matter if a girder were stained, perhaps, with the blood of one of those poor foreigners lying dead back there upon the shore?

Groups of idlers were gathered, with a few policemen, around some corpses that were stretched out on the beach some distance from the water. Strong, handsome fellows they had been, light-haired all; and bits of white skin, soft and smooth, though muscular, could be seen through the rents in their garments, while their blue eyes, glassy and staring in death, looked up at the sky with a mysterious fixity.

The Norwegian had been the most sizeable wreck of the blow, and the newspapers in town gave columns to it. The population of Valencia turned out as on a pilgrimage to look at the hulk, half sunken in the shifting sands. No one gave a thought to the lost fishing boats, and people seemed not to understand the wailing and lamentations of the poor women whose men had not come home.

The disaster to the fleet was not, however, so great as they had thought. The morning wore on and several boats came in that had been given up for lost. Some had made Denia or Gandia. Others had taken refuge in Cullera Harbor. And each

craft that appeared roused cheers of rejoicing and thanksgiving throughout the village, which joyfully made vows to all the saints who look after men of the sea.

In the end only one was not accounted for—the boat of *tio* Pascualo, the most thrifty saver of all the savers in the Cabañal, a man, decidedly, with an eye for money, a fisherman in winter and a smuggler in summer, a great skipper, and a frequent visitor to the coasts of Algiers and Oran, which he spoke of always as "across the way," as though Africa were on the sidewalk across the street.

Pascualo's wife, Tona, spent more than a week on the Breakwater, a suckling baby in her arms and another child, a chubby little lad, clinging to her skirts. She was sure Pascualo would come home; and every time a fresh detail of the storm was given her, she would tear her hair and renew her screams for the Holy Virgin's help. The fishermen never talked right out to her, but always stopped at the significant shrug of the shoulders. They had seen Pascualo last off the Cabo, drifting before the gale, dismasted. He could not have gotten in. One man had even seen a huge green wave break over him, taking the boat abeam, though he could not swear the craft had foundered.

In alternate spells of desperation and strange exhilarated hope, the miserable woman waited and waited with her two children. On the twelfth day,

a revenue cutter came into the port of the Cabañal, towing *tio* Pascualo's boat behind, bottom-up, blackened, slimy and sticky, floating weirdly like a big coffin and surrounded by schools of fish, unknown to local waters, that seemed bent on getting at a bait they scented through the seams of the wrecked hull.

The craft was righted and grounded on the sand. The masts were off even with the deck. The hold was full of water. When the fishermen went down inside to bail her out with pails, their bare feet, entangled in the mess of line and baskets and cordage, stepped finally on something soft. After a first instinctive cry of horrified revulsion, the men reached down under water with their hands and drew out—a corpse.

Tio Pascualo was hardly recognizable. His body was swollen, green, the belly inflated to the point of bursting. The decaying flesh was gnawed away in places by hungry little fishes, some of which, loath to let go their prey, were still clinging to it by their teeth, wriggling their tails and giving an appearance of disgusting life to the horrible mass. The bold sailor's fate was clear. He had been hurled through the hatchway by a lunge of the deck before the boat had been lost. Inside there he had lain with his skull crushed. That boat—the dream of his life, the achievement of thirty years of penny-saving—had proved to be his coffin!

Tio Pascualo's widow, in her hysterical weeping, shrank from the repugnant body. The women of the Cabañal raised their voices in weird lamentation and trooped in company behind the wooden box that was carried at once to the cemetery. For a week *tio* Pascualo was the subject of every conversation. Then people forgot about him, save that the appearance of his mourning widow, with one child in her arms and another at her side, chanced to remind them of his grewsome end.

Tona, indeed, had lost not her husband only. Dire poverty was upon her, not the poverty that is hard but tolerable, but the poverty that is terrifying even to the poor, the want of the homeless and the breadless, the want that holds out a mendicant hand from the street corner to beg a penny and give thanks for a crust of mildewed bread.

Help came readily while her misfortune was fresh in the minds of the villagers. A subscription was taken up among the fisherfolk, and on the proceeds, with other gifts that came in, she was able to get along for three or four months. Then people forgot. Tona was no longer the widow of a man lost at sea. She was a pauper ever on hand with the wail for alms. Many doors were at last shut in her face, and old friends of her girlhood, who had always welcomed her with a smile, now looked the other way when she went by.

But Tona was not the woman to be crushed by

general ostracism. *Eah!* Enough of this bawling! We've got to get out of the dumps! She was a woman with two arms like any other, and two brats that could eat and eat and eat!

She had nothing left in the world but the wreck of her husband's boat, in which he had died. It lay rotting out there on the beach, high and dry, now soaked by the rains, now oozing tar under the flaming sun, the mosquitos breeding in the muck inside.

Tona suddenly had an idea. That boat might be good for something. It had killed the father of those tots of hers. Why should it not help to feed them? *Tio* Mariano, a tight-fisted bachelor, first cousin to the late Pascualo, and supposed to be quite well off, had taken a liking to the widow's children; and however much it pained him, he went down into his pocket and gave her the money to make her start.

In one side of the boat a hole was sawed to make a door and a small counter. Against the wall inside some barrels of wine, gin and brandy were ranged in line. The deck was taken off and replaced with a roof of tarred boards, to give headroom, at least, in the dingy hovel. At the bow and at the stern two portholes were cut, and two partitions were set up with the boards remaining—one "stateroom" for the widow, the other for the boys. A shelter with a thatched roof was raised in front

of the door; under it a couple of rickety tables, and as many as half a dozen bamboo tabourets. The whole outfit made quite a show. The hulk of death became a beach café within easy reach of the *casa del bòus,* the barn where the oxen for beaching and launching the boats were kept, and at the very place where the fish was brought ashore and where some one was always around.

The women folks of the Cabañal began to rub their eyes. That Tona was the Devil himself! See what an eye she had for business! Her gin and brandy went by the barrelful. The men who used to go to the taverns in town now got their drinks right there of her. They were always playing *truque y flor* on the shaky tables under the shelter while waiting for the boats to put to sea, brightening up the games with glass after glass of *caña,* which Tona averred was genuine imported Cuban rum.

Tio Pascualo's stranded craft went sailing, wind astern, on a new voyage toward prosperity. Out there on the rocking sea with the old skipper's seines, the boat had never earned so much as now under the widow's charge, though its seams were open and its timbers were rotting away. Evidence of profit could have been found in the successive transformations the old hulk kept undergoing. First curtains went up on the stateroom windows, and if you looked inside, you saw new coverlets of down, and white

sheets. A coffee percolator began to shine like polished gold on the counter. The shelter outside the door grew longer and longer, with more tables and better ones. A dozen hens or more began to cluck about over the white sand, bossed by a wicked rooster with a tenor voice who was more than a match for any stray dog that same along looking for trouble. From a pen nearby echoed the grunts of a hog too fat to breathe without disturbing the neighborhood. And in front of the counter, outside the hull, were two stoves with rice and fish sputtering fragrantly in oil in their respective frying-pans. A going concern, no doubt of that! Not a question of getting rich, you understand, but a bite to eat for the boys! And Tona would smile and rub her hands gloatingly. Not a cent did she owe in the world. The ceiling of the boat was festooned with dry *morcillas* and shiny *sobreasadas*—her favorite sausages; and there were strips of smoked tunny, and a ham or two sprinkled with red pepper. The barrels were full of drink. Along the shelves stretched an array of bottles with liqueurs of every color. And the pots and pans hanging on the walls could be set sizzling in an instant with all kinds of good nourishing victuals. Just think of it! A widow starving a short time since, and now already on Easy Street! Say all you want—but God looks after decent people!

With plenty to eat and nothing to worry about,

Tona seemed to grow young again. Inside her boat there she took on a glowing well-fed buxomness, and her skin, protected from the sun and brine, lost that harsh baked bronze of the women who worked along shore. When serving at the counter her ample breast sported inevitably one of an endless assortment of colored handkerchiefs, *tomate y huevo,* complicated arabesques of tomato red and egg yellow worked into thick well woven silk.

She could even afford purely decorative luxuries. Above the wine casks at the back of the "shop" the whitewashed timbers screamed aloud with cheap high colored chromos that reduced Tona's neckwear to silence, quite. The fishermen drinking outside under the shelter would look up over the counter and feast their eyes on "The Lion Hunt," "The Death of the Good Man and the Sinner," "The Ladder of Life," not to mention a half dozen miracle-workers with Saint Anthony in the place of honor; and a cartoon showing the lean merchant who trusts, and the fat one who sells for cash, with the customary legend: "If you want credit, come back to-morrow!"

Tona could be quite properly satisfied at the relative comfort in which her young ones were growing up. Business was getting better and better, and an old stocking which she kept hidden between the foot board of her bunk and the big mattress there,

was gradually filling with the silver *douros* she had saved.

Sometimes she could contain her happiness no longer; and to view her good fortune in perspective, as it were, she would walk down to the fringe of the surf, and look back with welling eyes at the hen coop, the open-air kitchen, the sonorous pig-pen, and finally the boat itself, its bow and stern projecting from a maze of fences, cane-work and thatch, and painted a clean dazzling white like some bark of dream-land tossed by a hurricane into a barnyard.

Not that life did not still have its hardships for her. She got little sleep. To begin with, she had to be up at sunrise every morning, and oftentimes, after midnight, when boats would make shore late or be leaving before dawn, the fishermen would start banging on her door and she would have to get up and serve them. These early morning sprees were the ones that made most money, though they caused her most uneasiness on the whole. She knew whom she was dealing with. Ashore for a few hours after a week at sea, those men wanted all the pleasures of land crowded into minutes of pure joy. They lighted on wine like flies on honey. If the older men soon fell asleep with their pipes dead between their teeth, not so the sturdier boys, aflame from the privations and abstinence of life at sea.

They would look at *siñá* Tona in ways that would bring gestures of annoyance from her and make her wonder how she could fight off the brutal caresses of those Tritons in striped shirts.

She had never been a beauty; but her trace of fleshiness, her big black eyes that seemed to brighten a clean brownish countenance, and especially the light wrapper she would hurriedly throw on to attend to her nocturnal patronage, lent her charm in the eyes of those healthy youths who laid their courses toward the Valencian shore with joyous anticipation of a sight of *siñá* Tona.

But Tona was a woman of brain and brawn, and she knew how to handle those fellows. She bestowed no favors. When their words were overbold she would answer with disdain. To nudges she replied with cuffs, and once when a sailor seized her suddenly from behind, she laid him flat with a well placed kick, tough as iron and sturdy as a mainmast though he was.

She would have no love affairs, even if other women did! A man would never touch the end of her little finger, no siree! The idea, besides! A mother of two children, little angels, sleeping there behind one thickness of boards—you could hear them breathe, even—and she alone in the world to support them!

The future of the boys was beginning to cause the mother hours of thought. They had been growing

up there, on the beach, like two baby gulls, nesting in the shade of the grounded boats when the sun burned hotly, or hunting conchas and periwinkles on the shore uncovered at low tide, their brown chubby legs sinking deep into the masses of seaweed. The older child, Pascualet, was the living likeness of his father, stocky, full-bellied, moon-faced. He looked like a seminary student specializing on the Refectory, and already the fishermen had dubbed him "the Rector," a nickname that was to stick to him for life. He was eight years older than Antonio, a lean, nervous, domineering little fellow who had Tona's eyes.

Pascualet became a real mother to his younger brother. While *siñá* Tona was busy with the tavern, during the earliest days which had been the hard ones, the good-natured boy had carried the baby around with the tenderness of a nurse and had played with the young torments of the water front with that snarling squirming brat in his arms, who would bite and scratch when anything did not suit him. At night, in the cramped "stateroom" of the tavern-boat, "Tonet" would stretch out full length in the most comfortable place, letting his fat brother curl up in a corner where he might, provided he did not disturb the little devil, who in spite of his smallness ruled his elder brother like a tyrant.

The two boys would fall asleep to the lullaby of the waves which on days of spring-tide reached al-

most to the tavern; and in winter, when the cold wind would try to make its way through the seams in the old boat's walls, they would snuggle close together under the same coverlet. Some nights they would be wakened by the uproar from the drunken sailors in the tavern, and hear the angry words of their mother, or the slaps she would rain on impudent cheeks. More than once the frail partition of their bedroom had threatened to give way as some staggering body fell against it. But then they would go to sleep again, with the carefree innocence of children, with no suspicions, and without alarm.

Siñá Tona had an unjust weakness for her younger son. In the first days of her widowhood, when she saw the two little heads sleeping side by side in the narrow cabin, resting perhaps on the very timbers that had crushed their father's skull, she had felt an equal tenderness for them both, as though the deadly bark were to destroy them as it had killed Pascualo. But when prosperity came, and the memory of the tragedy grew dim with the years, *siñá* Tona showed unmistakable fondness for Tonet, a child of feline shrewdness, who treated everybody with imperious petulance, but for his mother always had the speculative fondness of a sly cat.

What a joy Tonet was for her, a beach vagabond at seven, spending the whole day away from home with one gang or another, and coming back at night

with his clothes soaked and torn, and his pockets full of sand! The older boy, meanwhile, now that his brother had been weaned from him, would be in the tavern, washing dishes, waiting on customers, feeding the hens, or watching, with grave responsibility written on his features, the two frying-pans that were crackling on the stoves.

The mother, sometimes, on suddenly waking from a doze behind the counter and finding Pascualet in front of her, would start with violent surprise. Pascualo, for all the world! Just as she had known him as a boy, before their marriage, when he was "cat" on a fishing vessel! The same round jolly face, the same stout square-shouldered body, the same stubby sturdy legs, the same expression of an honest simpleton with a gift for plodding work that stamped him in advance as a steady reliable chap, an *hombre de bien.* And the same inside, as well! Good-natured, too good-natured if anything, and bashful! But a bull-dog when it came to hanging on to money; and a mad fondness for the sea, prolific mother of men of courage, strong enough and brave enough to earn their living from her bosom!

By the time he was thirteen, the tavern had become quite uncongenial to "the Rector," as he gave to understand with a word dropped here and there, or with one of those occasional half-finished and incoherent sentences, which were all that ever came

out of that hard head of his. He had not been born to the tavern business! Something altogether too tame for him! That might do for Tonet, who didn't like real work overwell. As for himself, he was a man of muscle, and he loved the sea. No, he must be a fisherman like his father!

When *siñá* Tona heard such remarks the terrifying thought of the catastrophe of that Lenten Tuesday would come back to her mind. But the boy held his ground. Things like that didn't happen every day. And since he felt a hankering for it, the profession of his father and his grandfather was good enough for him; and *tio* Borrasca, an old skipper who had been a great friend of *tio* Pascualo, thought so too.

One year when the drag-net season came around, the *pesca del bòu,* as the Valencians say, where two boats worked in team, Pascualet shipped with *tio* Borrasca as "cat," *gato de barca,* for his keep, and all he might make, in addition, from the *cabets,* the small fry, shrimp, sea-horses and so on, that came up in the nets from the bottom along with the big fish.

His apprenticeship started auspiciously. Up to that time Pascualet had gotten along on the old clothes his father had left. But *siñá* Tona wanted him to begin his new trade with real dignity; so she closed the tavern, one afternoon, and went off to a ship chandler's bazaar at the Grao. The boy

remembered the excitement of that visit to the stores for years and years. What gorgeous things, those blue coats, those yellow oilskins, those big rubber boots—only captains could afford them, surely! But he was proud, withal, of his own helper's outfit—two shirts of mallorquin, as stiff and prickly and rough as so much sand-paper, a sash of black wool, a set of glaring yellow overalls, a red cap to pull down over the back of his head in bad weather, and another of black silk to go ashore in. For once in his life he had on clothes that fitted him. He was through struggling with those old coats of his father that on blowy days filled like mainsails and made him trot down the wind in spite of himself. Shoes had been out of the question. Those nimble feet of his had never known the torment of a leather casing.

And a real calling it was that the boy felt for the sea. The boat of *tio* Borrasca was more to his taste than the grounded hulk on shore there with its grunting hogs and cackling hens. He worked hard; and to supplement his wages he got a few kicks from the old skipper, who could be gentle enough on land, but once with a deck under him would have made Saint Anthony himself toe the mark. He could run up the mast to set the lantern or clear a line as spryly as a cat. When the time came to *chorrar,* to haul the nets, he would take his hand at the ropes. He scrubbed the decks, stowed the

baskets of fish in the hold, and kept the fires going in the galley, so that the men of the crew never had a chance to complain. And what luxuries in reward for all that enthusiasm! When the captain and the men were through eating, the leavings were for Pascualet and the other "cat," who had been standing by motionless and respectful during the meal. The two boys would sit down on the bow with black pots between their legs and loaves of bread under their arms. They would eat almost everything with their spoons, but when scooping became too slow, they would begin to mop the bottoms of the pots with crusts of bread till the metal was polished and shining. Then they would carefully collect the few drops of wine that the men had left in their tin cups. Finally, if there was no work to do, the "cats" would lie down like princes in the forecastle, their shirt-tails hanging out, their bellies toward the stars, their faces pleasantly tickled by the breeze, till they were rocked to sleep by the swaying of the vessel. There was tobacco aplenty. *Tio* Borrasca was always raising a rumpus because he couldn't understand how his pockets ran empty so soon, now of the *alguilla* of Algiers, now of the Havana fine cut—according to the stock of the latest smuggler to make the Cabañal.

That was real life in Pascualet's eyes. Every time he came in, his mother could see that he had grown, was stronger, tanned a darker brown, but

as good-natured as ever in spite of his fights with other "cats," husky little hectors who would stop at nothing, and who always puffed smoke in your face, when you talked to them, from pipes as big as they were.

These rapid visits home were all there was to remind *siñá* Tona that she had an elder son at all. The mistress of the tavern had something else on her mind. She was now spending entire days alone in her hulk there. "The Rector" was offshore, earning his share of *cabets,* returning only Sundays to hand over, with a show of pride, the three or four pesetas that represented his week's wage. The other boy, that lost soul Tonet, had turned out a regular waster—that was the very word for him. And he never came home unless he was hungry. He had joined the ragamuffins along shore, a swarm of wharf rats that knew no more about their fathers than the homeless dogs who went with them on their raids. He could swim like a fish, and all through the summer days he loafed around the liners in the harbor, without a stitch on his lean sunburned body, diving for the silver coins the passengers threw overboard. At night he would come home, his trousers in rags, his face scratched and bleeding. His mother had caught him several times fondly caressing the brandy keg; and one evening she had had to put on her shawl and go to harbor-police headquarters, where her tears and lamenta-

tions finally got him loose on the promise that she would cure him of his ugly weakness for scraping the bottoms of the sugar boxes stored on the piers.

That Tonet was a limb of the Devil! And, *diós mio,* where did he get it, where did he get it! How could two decent honest parents, such as she and Pascualo had been, ever get to have a boy like that? With a perfectly good dinner waiting for him at home, why did he insist on sneaking around the steamers from Scotland, waiting for the watchman to turn his back so as to be off with a dried codfish under his arm? No, that boy was to be the death of her! Twelve years old, no inclination to work, and not the slightest fear or respect for her, in spite of all the broomsticks she had broken over his back.

Siñá Tona usually confided her troubles to a certain Martinez, a young policeman who patrolled that part of the shore, spending the noon hours under the café shelter, his rifle across his knees, his eyes vaguely fixed on the horizon of the sea, and his ears filled with the running plaint of the tavernkeeper. A handsome chap Martinez was, an Andalusian from Huelva, slender and trim of person, natty as could be in the old service uniform which he sported with a truly martial swagger, twirling the corner of his blond mustache with an air that people called "distinguished." *Siñá* Tona admired the man. After all, breeding will come

out! You can tell it a mile away. How Martinez talked, for instance! You could see from his choice of words that he was a man of schooling. For that matter he had studied years and years in the Seminary up his way; and if now he was only a patrolman, it was because he hadn't wanted to be a priest —he had quarreled with his family on the subject— preferring to see a bit of the world by enlisting in the army. The mistress of the tavern listened open-mouthed to the tales he told about himself in a heavy Andalusian dialect where every "s" was like "th" in "thing." In deference to his learning, she answered in kind, floundering about in an absurd and unintelligible Castillian which made people in the village laugh.

"See, *siñor Martines,* that jacknape of mine is driving me mad with all his carrying on. I say to him, I say: 'Anything wrong in this house, jailbird? Well, then, why go tearing around with that gang of good-for-nothings, who will die at the end of a rope, every one of them!' now *osté siñor Martines,* you know how to talk in good grammar. You just tell him what is what. You tell him they'll put him in the lock-up at Valencia if he isn't a good boy."

And *siñor Martines* promised to take the little rogue in hand, and he did, in fact, give him a lecture, which reduced Tonet, for a moment at least, to cowering in terror in the presence of that uniform

and that heavy gun, which the soldier would never let go of for an instant. These slight favors gradually brought Martinez into the family, making his relations with *siñá* Tona more and more intimate. He got his meals now at the tavern, and spent most of his time there; and the mistress finally had the pleasure of darning his stockings and sewing the buttons on his underwear. Poor *siñor Martines!* What would happen to a fine young man like him without a woman around? He would get to be as shabby and disreputable as a stray cat. And, frankly, no decent lady could allow that to happen!

Summer afternoons when the sun was beating full upon the deserted beach, turning the baked sand into a fiery furnace, one scene would always be enacted in the shade of the thatched roof of the tavern shelter. Martinez would be seated on a reed stool with one elbow on the counter, reading Perez Escrich, his favorite author, in bulging grimy volumes with the corners worn down from having passed from patrol to patrol along the coast. *Siñá* Tona was convinced at last. That was where he got all those big words and that moral philosophy which stirred the bottom of her soul; and she looked at the books with the superstitious awe of an illiterate. Across the counter, mechanically sewing, without thinking of what she was doing, she would sit looking at Martinez fixedly, studying his thin blond mustache for half an hour at a time, then the elegant

lines of his nose for just as long, and finally the exquisite skill with which he parted his hair, making two absolutely even plasters of golden locks on either side.

Sometimes, on looking up at the bottom of a page, Martinez would find the two black eyes of *siñá* Tona nailed upon him; and he would blush and go on reading. Then afterwards the tavern keeper would be ashamed of herself. The idea! When Pascualo was alive, she had looked at the fellow casually once or twice, because she thought his face was interesting. But now she sat there looking and looking and looking, like a fool! What would people say if they ever caught her at it! Of course! She liked him! And why not? So handsome, and such fine manners! And how well he could talk! But after all, that was absurd. She was well on toward forty, thirty-six or so, she couldn't just remember. And he, well, twenty-four at the outside! But then again, and then again! What difference did a few years make? She was not so bad looking. She carried her age well. To settle that question, just listen to the men off the boats who were always pestering her! And if it was all so absurd, why were people gossiping about it? The other patrolmen, friends of Martinez, and the fish-women on the beach, were always teasing them with indirect allusions which, if anything, were too direct.

And the expected happened. To silence her own

misgivings, *siñá* Tona argued that her boys needed a father, and Martinez was just the man. The courageous Amazon, who would cudgel the roughest sailor at the slightest flippancy, herself took the initiative, overcoming the bashfulness of that timid overgrown boy; and he, submissive rather than seeking, allowed things to take their course, like a superior being with thoughts absorbed in higher things, and responding to affairs of earth like an automaton.

The matter did not remain long secret; nor was Tona displeased at the talk. She wanted it known that the tavern had a man in charge. When she had something to attend to in the Cabañal, she left the shop in care of Martinez, who sat, as he had always sat, under the shelter, looking out to sea with the rifle across his knees. Even the two boys understood that something was going on. "The Rector," on his turns ashore, would look at his mother with a perplexed expression on his face, and he was timid and ashamed in the presence of that big yellow-headed youth in uniform whom he always found about the tavern. Not so Tonet. That rascal smiled broadly all the time, reflecting the gibes and sarcasms he had picked up along shore. And he ceased to be at all impressed at the sermons of the patrolman, which he now rebutted by thumbing his nose and going off down the beach cavorting and turning handsprings.

Meanwhile Tona was passing through a new honeymoon in the full maturity of life. In comparison, her marriage with Pascualo seemed like monotony itself. Into her passion for the soldier she put all the vehemence of a woman whose youth is sloping toward sunset, and she paraded her joy in bold indifference to what people were saying. Let them talk! Let them talk till their tongues wore out! Many women were worse than she was. Of course the girls were sore at her carrying off a good-looking fellow right under their noses!

Martinez, for his part, with the usual dreamy expression on his face, let himself be kissed and pampered as though he deserved every bit of it; besides his prestige had gone up not only in his squad but with his superiors. Why not, with a boat full of the real stuff, not to mention that stocking crammed with silver *duros* that sometimes stuck into his ribs as he lay down on the bed in the stateroom! To make sleeping more comfortable he removed that annoying obstruction, and *siñá* Tona said not a word. Was he not to be her husband? The money was all hers, and so long as the tavern paid as well as it was paying, there was no need to worry.

In four or five months, however, Tona began to go around with a long face. See here, Martinez, *siñor Martines,* just come down out of the clouds and listen to Tona for a moment. Tona is saying something to you. She is saying that something

must be done, in the circumstances. The present situation cannot last. A satisfactory explanation must be ready for what is bound to occur. A respectable mother of two children cannot be the respectable mother of three children, without a man there to step forward and say: "This is mine!"

And Martinez said: *"Bueno!"*, but there was a sign of annoyed surprise in the way he said it, as though he had suddenly bumped against some hard reality in his plunge from the ideal heights where he always dwelt as a man unappreciated by the world, and where he could dream at leisure of becoming a general, a Dictator, and all the other things the heroes of Perez Escrich become, in that imaginative writer's novels!

Yes, he would send for the certificates necessary for the marriage license. But it would take time of course, because Huelva was a long way off. Tona waited, with her thoughts on Huelva, a city hazy in the distance, which she figured must be off around Cuba, or the Philippines, perhaps. And time went by, while the situation grew more and more alarming.

Martinez, *siñor Martines,* in two months . . . Tona cannot pretend any longer! People are noticing. What will the boys say when they find that they have a young brother? But Martinez got cross. It wasn't his fault, if the documents didn't

come. She could see how many letters he kept writing.

Finally the patrolman announced one morning that there was no other way out of it. He would have to go and get those cursed papers himself, and he had secured leave of absence from his captain. Fine! *Siñá* Tona thought that was a good idea. She gave him all the money she had, sleeked his hair one last time, wept a little, and . . . "Good-by! And don't be long!"

A patrolman going by one day was kind enough to tell her the real truth. All that talk about going to Huelva was a lie. Martinez had been writing for papers all right, but to Madrid, asking to be transferred to another district at the opposite end of Spain, since the climate at Valencia was not good for him. And he had won his point. He had been assigned to the department of La Coruña.

That was a bad moment for *siñá* Tona. The thief! The bandit! You just trust these smooth talkers! So that was to be her pay for giving him her last cent—and combing his hair, the towhead, out there under the shed in the afternoon, as kind and soft-like as a mother.

But for all of Tona's desperation, in a few weeks she was handing out drinks across the counter while she nursed a white sickly girl baby, a tiny little thing with blue eyes and an over-sized yellow head that looked like a ball of gold.

CHAPTER II

SIÑÁ TONA'S FAMILY

AND the years rolled on with nothing further to disturb the monotonous course of life for the family sheltered in the tavern-boat. The Rector had grown up to be a lusty sailor, stingy of words, fearless in danger. From *gato de barca* he had graduated to the rank of able-bodied seaman and was the man of the crew on whom *tio* Borrasca most relied. Every month Pascualet handed four or five *duros* over to his mother to keep for him.

Tonet was not settling down to any trade. A stubborn fight was going on between him and his mother. Tona would run her legs off finding him jobs which he would proceed to lose. For about a week he was apprentice to a cobbler. Then he went for a couple of months as "cat" on *tio* Borrasca's boat; and not even that stern disciplinarian was able to kick any obedience into him. Then he tried his hand at coopering, the steadiest of all trades; but his boss bounced him to the sidewalk in a very few days. Then he joined a stevedore's *colla* in town; but he never worked unloading

the steamers more than two days a week, and that much quite against his will.

But his many shortcomings as vagrant and rowdy found easy excuse in *siñá* Tona's eyes, when she would see him of a holiday—and what days were not holidays for that rascal?—with that fluffy flat silk cap of his topping off a brown face with just the suggestion of a mustache showing, a blue denim coat fitting close to his figure, and a black silk sash wound around his waist over a flannel shirt with black and green checks. Any woman would be proud to own a boy like that! He was going to be another terror on the lines of that Martinez—curse the wretch—but with more "seasoning," more get-up-and-go, to him. To be sure of that, it was enough to watch the girls in the Cabañal when he was around. They would be willing to scratch each other's eyes out to get him for a lover! Tona was kept posted on all his adventures, and was immensely flattered at the boy's popularity and "social position." A bit too fond of brandy, yes—and what a pity!—but a regular fellow, quite different from that big good-natured booby of a Pascualet, who wouldn't say a word if a cart ran over him.

One Sunday evening in a tavern appositely labeled the "Inn of Good Morals," he began to throw bottles at some stevedores who had accepted a cut in wages; and when the police came in to restore order, they caught him, red-handed, chasing his enemies over

the tops of the tables with his knife drawn. More than one week-end he spent in the jail at headquarters whence his mother's tears and the "pull" *tio* Mariano had as a politician and distributor of election money, would finally extricate him. And arrest proved so salutary to him that on the very night of one of his discharges he was taken again for drawing a knife on two English sailors, who, after a number of treats, tried to explain some of the details of the Marquis of Queensbury rules to him. Not much good at drudgery, but able to drink anybody under the table, and do it night after night, passing from dive to dive, and not showing his face at home for weeks at a time!

Tonet had an intimate way of conducting his more serious love-affairs that made many people suspect him of anticipating legal ceremonies. But his mother took no stock in such reports. She did not insist on a princess for her Tonet, but how could any one think he would ever marry that girl of *tio* Paella the truckman! Dolores, shameless hussy, was pretty enough, to be sure, but bound to make the woman who got her for a daughter-in-law lead a song—and a dance! What could you expect of a girl brought up without a mother by that *tio* Paella, a tippler who could never walk straight as he went out to hitch up at daylight, and who was getting thinner and thinner from alcohol, except for his

nose that was growing so big it almost covered his puffy cheeks.

A tough customer was *tio* Paella, and no one said a good word for him. His trade was all in town, in the Fishmarket section of Valencia. When an English boat came in, he openly offered his services to take sailors to places only he knew about; and on summer nights he would load his wagon up with girls in white wrappers, with painted cheeks and flowers in their hair, and drive parties of men off with them to various resorts along the shore, where they would have one grand carousal till sunrise, while he sat off in a corner, his whip in one hand and a wine mug in the other, paternally chaperoning what, sacrilegiously, he called his "flock."

And he talked right out regardless of his girl's presence. The language he used to her was the language he used to the women he knew in town. When he was drunk he would tell everything to the last detail; and little Dolores, crouching at a safe distance from her father's boots, would listen to the whole story with her eyes wide open in amazement and, written on her face, an eager unhealthy curiosity in all the filthy things *tio* Paella would be talking about in his brutal soliloquy, gloating over the infamous revelries he had been witnessing.

That was good training for a girl, wasn't it! What she didn't know was probably not worth

knowing. And Tona was to be mother-in-law of a piece like that! Pretty as she was, all that had kept her off the streets so far was the good advice some of the women of the neighborhood gave her.

Even so, her conduct with Tonet was getting to be the talk of the village. The boy went in and out in her house as though he were quite at home; and he took his meals there, knowing very well that the truckman would not be back till late at night. Dolores did his washing and even rifled *tío* Paella's pockets to get money for her lover; and that made the teamster vomit mouthfuls of vile oaths on the subject of false friendship, because he thought his tavern companions had robbed him while he was drunk. One thing at a time, Tonet was moving all his belongings from the tavern-boat to the truckman's cabin, as though the girl were foreclosing on his property.

And *siñá* Tona was living more and more by herself. The Rector was always off peseta-hunting, as he said, either fishing, or sometimes shipping on one of the *laúds* that ran to Torrevieja for salt. Tonet was hanging around the liquor places or staying up at *tío* Paella's. Poor Tona was growing old behind the counter of her little shop, carrying the yellow-headed baby around, loving her with a strange vehemence at times, and then again hating her at the thought of that thief of a Martinez—whom the Devil take in due time!

So it was only off and on that God looked after decent people! Things were not going so well as they used to go, in the early days of Tona's widowhood. Other old hulks had been turned by copycats into taverns along the beach; and the fishermen could choose where they would go. She, besides, was not so pretty as she had been once; and the younger fellows were not so eager to buy drinks of her on the chance of getting something more. The tavern was living on its old habitués, and bringing in just enough to keep the wolf from the door. More than once Tona would walk down to the water as she used to and sadly look back at the two stoves now cold, the fences now rickety and tumbling down, the pig-pen where a lean hog scarcely ever grunted at all, and the half dozen hens hungrily pecking about the sands. How time dragged for her in that stultifying life of solitude, which was enlivened only when Tonet got into trouble or when Tona's eyes would fall on a picture of *siñor Martines* in uniform, which she had hung up in the stateroom as a constant and refinedly cruel reminder of her one mistake.

Little Roseta, a favor left behind in the tavern-boat by the considerate patrolman, gave her mother hardly a moment's peace. She was growing up like an untameable wildcat. Every evening Tona had to go and hunt for her before she could shut her up in the boat after a hard spanking; and from

morning till night she would never be seen unless she happened to be hungry. Thy will be done! One more cross for poor Tona to drag through this vale of tears! Taciturn and fond of her own company, Roseta would lie out full length on the wet sand, playing with shells or making piles of seaweed. She would sit for hours with her blue eyes staring into space with fixed hypnotic vacancy, the breeze twirling her yellow locks, as twisted and withy as so many snakes, or blowing up the faded old frock that reached the knees of two slim legs, shiny white, which had known no stockings other than the coat of brown the sun burned over their extremities in summer. Or for hours also she would lie face downward on the sand, which would take on the imprint of her body under her, bathing her face in the thin ripple of water that the surf threw up and sucked back again over the shining beach spangled with all the capricious tracings of moiré.

She was an incorrigible truant, a chip of the old block, as Tona put it, thinking of that loafer who had been responsible for her, and who also sat staring day in day out at the horizon like a good-for-nothing idiot, half awake. If Tona had had to depend on that girl for a living, a fine mess she would have been in! Lazy, irresponsible, was no name for it! Couldn't wipe a plate or wash a glass in the café without breaking up housekeeping! Put a herring on to fry when she was tending the fire and she'd

burn it black! Much better to let her run the beach or go to the dressmaker's shop in the Cabañal.

At times the child showed a mad eagerness to study, and at the risk of a whipping, would run away from home and go to the village school. But when Tona found this out and was inclined to encourage her, she would play truant all the time. It was only in summer that she was of any use at all. Then a fondness for money could be reconciled with her passion for roving aimlessly here and there; so during the bathing season, she would take a jar almost as big as herself, fill it with water from the *fònt de Gas,* and go glass in hand among the bathers, or even among the carriages driving on the pier, shaking her tangled yellow head of hair and crying in rather a faint voice: *Al aigua fresqueta!* Other times it would be a basket, instead, filled with cakes, seasoned some with salt and some with sugar, which she hawked plaintively about: *Salaes y dolses!* In this way Roseta would bring as many as two *reals* to her mother in the evening, and Tona's face would brighten up, for with business going as it was, she was getting selfish.

That was the story of Roseta's infancy and girlhood—a frowning antipathy toward people generally; a menacing submissiveness to her mother's whippings; hatred for Tonet who had never paid the slightest attention to her; a smile at times for the Rector, who, on his brief visits home, would

playfully twitch one of her yellow curls; and scorn for the ragamuffins of the beach whom she refused to play with and held off with the haughty reserve of a queen forty inches long.

Tona eventually lost all interest in the child, though Roseta was her last resource in that miserable hovel which, in the long nights of winter, was as lonely as a tomb. Tonet and the teamster's daughter were her one concern. That wench was bent on carrying off everything Tona had in the world! First it had been Tonet; but now Dolores had stolen the Rector also. For when Pascualet came ashore of late he would barely look in at the tavern-boat and then be off to the truckman's house where, evidently, he was a far from troublesome witness to what the lovers were doing. But it wasn't so much that, in itself, as the influence Dolores was coming to have with the boys, and thus spoiling a plan that Tona had had for a long time, of marrying Tonet to the daughter of an old friend of hers.

For mere looks, Rosario could not, of course, compare with the daughter of *tio* Paella; but her goodness—the strong point of insignificant human beings—was something Tona could not praise highly enough, though she never mentioned the most important thing of all, that Rosario was an orphan. Her parents had kept a store in the Cabañal, and from them Tona had bought her stock. Now that they were dead, the girl was left with a fortune al-

most, three or four thousand *duros,* to put it low. And how the poor thing loved Tonet! Whenever she met him on the streets of the Cabañal, she always had one of her placid wistful smiles for him; and she spent her afternoons with *siñá* Tona on the beach, just because the old lady was the mother of that bantam who was forever turning the village upside down.

But nothing good would ever come of that rogue! Not even Dolores, with all the control she had over him, could keep him in hand when one of his fits of deviltry came on. He would disappear for weeks at a time, when everything was as nice as you please, and then you would learn, not from him but from what people said, that he had been in Valencia, sleeping daytimes in some house in the Fishmarket district, getting drunk every night, beating the bad women of cheap lodging houses, and setting the whole town in an uproar whenever he had come off a heavy winner in some gambling-dive of the slums.

It was on one of these sprees that he took the foolish step which cost his mother days and days of lamentation and weeping. Tonet, with some other boys of his kind, went and joined the navy. Life in the Cabañal had grown too tame for them, and the wine there had lost its flavor. And the time came when the wretched scamp, in a blue sailor suit, a white cap cocked over one ear, and a bundle of clothes over his shoulders, dropped in to bid

Dolores and his mother good-by, on his way to Cartagena where he had been ordered to report for service.

Good riddance, after all! *Siñá* Tona was fond of her boy, but he wouldn't be getting into trouble again for a while! What a pity, though, for that poor girl Rosario, so modest and unassuming and never saying a word, who took her sewing down to the beach with Roseta, and was always timidly asking whether *siñá* Tona had had any word from Tonet. As time went on, the three women from the old hulk there on the shore followed all the voyages and stops of the schoolship *Villa de Madrid* with Tonet on board as able seaman. And how excited they would get when the postman would throw down on the wet counter a narrow envelope, sometimes sealed with red wax and then again with bread dough, and a complicated address written all over it in huge fat letters: *"For siñora tona The Woman who keeps The little café near The barn on the Beach."*

A strange exotic perfume seemed to come from the four pages of rough paper—a suggestion of trees and flowers the poor women did not know, of tempestuous seas, of shores draped in rosy mists under skies of fire, of Cuban negroes and Philippine Chinese, or of great cities of South America. What a boy, eh? What a lot he would have to talk about when he came home! Perhaps that crazy idea he

had had of going away to see the world would be the making of him in the end. And *siñá* Tona, with a return of the preference which made her idolize her younger son, felt an occasional flare of jealous anger as she pictured her Tonet, her fine brave little boy, off on that navy vessel under the strict discipline of cross officers, while the other one, the Rector, whom she had always thought a sleepy-head, was getting on in the world like anything, and had come to be quite a person in fishing circles.

Whenever Pascualet went out now, it was on shares with the skipper of his boat; and he had his secrets with *tio* Mariano, the important individual whom Tona fell back on in all her plights. The boy was making money, I'll bet you, and *siñá* Tona was hurt to the quick that he never brought a cent home any longer, and, indeed, now called at the tavern-boat, and sat a moment or two under the shelter outside, more for appearance's sake than anything else. He was saving his earnings, then! Well, who was keeping the money for him! Dolores! Dolores, of course, that witch who had given love-philters to both her boys—otherwise, why were they always following round after her as if they didn't dare say their soul was their own?

The Rector stuck to the teamster's house as if the poor fool thought he had some business there! Didn't he know, idiot, that Dolores was for the other one? Hadn't he seen Tonet's letters and the answers

she got a neighbor who had been to school to write for her? But three times donkey that he was, without paying the least attention to his mother's gibes, the Rector kept on going there and taking the favored place his brother had enjoyed, and apparently without appreciating the progress he was making. Dolores was now attending to him as she had to Tonet. She kept his clothes mended, and,—something she had never been troubled with in the case of that roistering loafer—she also was taking care of his savings.

One day *tio* Paella was brought home dead. He had got drunk and fallen from the seat of his cart, both wheels passing over him. But he died true to his reputation and just as he had lived, his whip clutched in one hand, sweating brandy from every pore, and the wagon full of the girls he spoke of, sacrilegiously, as his "flock." Dolores had no one else to lean on in her trouble than her *tia* Picores, the fishwoman, a chaperone not in every sense desirable, for she tempered kindness with fisticuffs.

Then it was, some two years after Tonet had gone away, that the big surprise occurred. Dolores, *gran diós!* and the Rector, were getting married. The Cabañal sat up nights discussing the overwhelming piece of news. And she did the proposing, I'll have you know! And people added other spicy bits of information that kept the laughing going. Tona talked more picturesquely than she

had ever talked before. So Her Royal Highness of the Horseshoe, that wench of a teamster's daughter, was getting into the family, as she had always meant to do! Well, that Queen Virtuous knew which side her bread was buttered on. Just what she needed—a husband with a thick skull and nothing inside it, who would be able to work like a cart-horse from morning till night. The pick-pocket! Just like her to steal the only man in the family that could earn a cent!

But then suddenly Tona thought of something, and she broke off her tirade. Better let them get married! That simplified the situation and favored her own plans. Tonet would now take Rosario! Though it was hard to swallow it all, she consented even to attend the wedding and say *filla mehua* to that scheming hussy who changed her men as she changed her clothes!

But what would Tonet say, what would Tonet do, when he heard the glad tidings? That was something to worry about, because everybody remembered the kind of temper he had when he got angry. So another surprise was due when the boy wrote back that everything was all right and that he was glad of it. Been away so long, you see, new faces, new places! That, doubtless, was why he found it so natural that Dolores should take a husband, since she had no one else to fall back on. Besides,—and this is what Tonet himself said—it was better

for her to marry his brother than run any risk on some one else; and the Rector was a good sort, too.

And the sailor showed himself just as reasonable when he turned up in the Cabañal one evening, with his discharge papers in his pocket and his bundle of clothes slung over his shoulder, surprising everybody with the fine appearance he made and with the reckless way he threw money around from the back pay he had just collected. Dolores he greeted affectionately as a sister he was fond of. Oh, that? What the devil! Don't even think of that! It was all right, all right! He had not been having a bad time himself on his trip around the world! And, in the midst of the popularity he was enjoying as a returned hero, Tonet seemed to forget all about Dolores and the Rector.

In front of the door of *tio* Paella's old place, now occupied by Pascualet, the villagers would sit in the open air all night sometimes, on low stools or on the ground, listening open-mouthed while the sailor told about the countries he had visited, embroidering his adventures with harmless embellishments to rouse greater thrills in his simple-minded audience. As compared with the uncouth fishermen they knew, dull and stupid from the routine of daily toil, or with the stevedores he used to work with in Valencia, Tonet looked like an aristocrat to the girls of the Cabañal, with his palish-dark face, his carefully curled mustache, his hands clean and

well manicured, his hair sleek and neatly brushed with a parting in the middle and—pasted down on his forehead—two cowlicks just visible under a silk cap!

Siñá Tona, for her part, was quite satisfied with her boy. As much of a scamp as ever, but he had himself more in hand, and it was evident that the navy discipline had done him good. The same old Tonet, but he had been taught to dress better and cleaner, and he could drink without drinking too much. A dandy still, but not sure to be getting into jail every other minute, and less bent on venting the caprices of a law-breaking daredevil than on satisfying the selfish cravings of a rake!

Proof of such progress was that he now took kindly to his mother's suggestions. Marry Rosario? No objection! Good girl, and a penny or two, that would be just the thing for a man of ideas, and the brains to carry them out. Money, after all, was what he needed. You couldn't expect a fellow fresh from the Royal Navy to go back to lugging bags and boxes on a wharf! Anything but that! And to *siñá* Tona's unbounded delight, Tonet took Rosario to wife.

Everything went finely. That was a handsome pair now, wasn't it?—a tiny little thing, Rosario, timid, obedient, believing in her husband as she believed in God; and Tonet, proud of his good luck, carrying himself as stiffly as if, under his flannel

shirt, he had a coat-of-mail, made of his wife's silver dollars, dispensing favors to right and left, living like a village squire, smoking his pipe all afternoon and evening in the tavern, and sporting long rubber boots on days when it rained!

Dolores showed no trace of emotion in the presence of her former sweetheart—only in her domineering eyes one might have seen an intenser sparkle, a glint of golden fire,—telltale evidence of yearnings unconfessed. And a happy year went rapidly by. But the money which penny by penny had been painfully assembled in the wretched store where Rosario had been born, streamed away between the fingers of the spendthrift husband; and the cow was running dry, as the mistress of the tavern-boat observed to her son one day, in a lecture on prodigality.

Along with poverty, discord, tears, and finally the flying fist entered Tonet's house. Rosario joined the neighbors on the beach and began to dirty her hands on the slimy fish baskets. Falling from her high estate as heiress and lady she became a fishwoman, one of the poorest and hardest-working followers of that soul-killing trade. She was up now every morning shortly after midnight, waiting on the shore with her feet in the puddles, drawing a frayed and threadbare shawl about her shivering body, when the storms blew. All the way to Valencia she would go on foot carrying that back-

breaking load of fish, and it would be dark again by the time she got home, faint with hunger and fatigue, but happy withal because her lord and master could still live the life of a gentleman without any humiliations to translate into swear-words and beatings. That Tonet might pass his night in the café, swapping stories with engineers from the steamers or skippers from the fishing boats, she would, many a time in the Fishmarket in town, stifle the hunger that gripped her at sight of the cups of steaming chocolate and the breaded chops her companions were busy with at the tables in their stalls.

The important thing was to keep her idol appeased, an idol so quick to wrath, so prone to curse the rotten marriage he had made. He had to have his *peseta* for the night's session at coffee and dominoes. He had to have his square meal and his flashy flannel shirts. He had a reputation to keep up. And so long as he had what he wanted, the poor little wife, thinner and more peaked every day, found all her struggles well worth while, cost her what it might. She was an old woman before thirty, but she could boast of exclusive proprietorship of the handsomest buck in the Cabañal.

Privation brought them closer to the Rector's household, which, while they were going down and down, was going up and up, on the wings of prosperity. Brothers have to stand together in hard

luck. Of course! And Rosario, though much against her inner preferences, went to see Dolores often, and accepted a renewal of intimate friendship between her husband and his sister-in-law. She was worried, but there must not be an open quarrel. The Rector would get mad; and he it was who kept them going on weeks when no fish came in, or when the village dandy found nothing to get a commission on as go-between in one of the little business deals that feature life in a seaport town. But the moment came when the two women, deadly enemies underneath, could pretend cordiality no longer. Four years after her marriage, Dolores was at last able to announce the coming of an heir to the Rector's fortune; and the Rector, with a silly smile on his moon-face, advertised the auspicious event on every hand—and all his acquaintances were delighted, though they smiled with a sly wink he did not notice. No one really knew, to be sure. But funny, wasn't it! That rather deliberate decision of Dolores corresponded strangely with the time Tonet had become a less frequent visitor to the café and had begun to spend more of his time in his brother's house.

The two women now spoke their minds with the savage frankness of their station. The breach between them became permanent. Tonet kept going to the Rector's place, but alone; and that made Rosario very angry, and the quarrels in her home

now ended always in ferocious cudgelings. And the time came when Rosario began to say openly that the baby looked like Tonet. Her husband meanwhile stuck closer than ever to the Rector, who had revived his old fondness for his younger brother, letting himself be sponged on in spite of his tightfistedness. The pretty daughter of *tio* Paella poked biting fun at that wreck she had for a sister-in-law, that old hen, quite *passée,* poor as a rat, a mere day laborer of the meanest kind, who couldn't hang on to the man she had married! Tonet, in fact, as in earlier days, was again following Dolores around like an obedient dog, sitting up when he was told to sit up, and charging when he was told to charge.

A withering blast of relentless hatred, of flaying jest and stinging insolence, swept from the old home of *tio* Paella, now repainted and with a new ell, toward the wretched tumble-down shack where Rosario had finally taken refuge in her penury. And well-meaning busybodies, with the holiest good-will toward both, kept telling what Rosario had said about Dolores and what Dolores had said about Rosario, taking care that every apostrophe should reach its destination and receive its fit reply.

When Rosario, flaming with anger and weeping from sheer despair, would simply have to tell some one of her troubles, she would go off to the tavern-boat, which, like its mistress, was also aging rapidly with the years. There she would be listened to in

silence, with an expression of sorrow, or a shake of the head from *siñá* Tona and Roseta, who were living on in sullen antipathy toward one another in spite of their relationship, agreeing only on one thing, that men were beneath contempt. The old hulk, that served them as lair, was a sort of vantage point from which they were able to follow the war between the two families.

"Men! Men! What fleas!" *siñá* Tona would say, with a glance at the picture of the patrolman, who seemed to be the presiding genius of the place. "Men! Crooks every one of them, not worth the rope to hang them with!" And Roseta, with her big bright sea-green eyes—the eyes of a virgin who knows all about the world and is quite sure of herself—would murmur for once approvingly: "And those who are not scamps like Tonet are like the Rector—puddingheads!"

CHAPTER III

A FAMILY ENTERPRISE

THOUGH spring had not yet come, the sun was so hot, that day, that the Rector and Tonet, to talk things over down on the beach, had sought out the shade of an old boat drawn up high and dry on the sand. There would be plenty of time to get their tan on when they got out to sea. The two men talked slowly and sleepily as if the glare and the heat along shore had gone to their heads. A real day, come now! Who would have thought Easter was still a week away, when, usually, there were squalls all the time and sudden tempests.

The sky, overflowing with sunlight, had a whitish sheen. A few silver clouds were lazily drifting along like handfulls of foam scattered hap-hazard over the expanse of heaven; and from the heated sands a damp radiation was shimmering, giving tremulous, hazy outlines to objects in the distance. Nothing was going on along the beach itself. The *casa del bòus,* where the launching oxen were idly chewing their cud, rose with its red roof and its blue trimmings, over long lines of boats drawn up

on shore to make a sort of nomad city with streets and cross roads, much like a Greek encampment of the Heroic Age, when the triremes were used for entrenchments. The lateen masts, gracefully tilted forward, with their points blunt and fat, looked like a forest of headless lances. The tarred ropes twined and intertwined like lichens and vines. Under the big sails, which had been lowered to the decks, a whole people of amphibians was swarming,—red legs bare and caps pulled down over ears—repairing nets or tending galley fires where fish were frying with appetizing fragrance. The hulls, of wide bilge, painted white or blue, stretched away along the glaring shore, like big-bellied sailors lying on their backs and taking the sun.

In this improvised city, which might, before the night was over, be broken up and scattered to the four winds beyond the girdling horizon, the order and symmetry of a modern town laid out by a surveyor could have been discerned. In the front line, nearest the waves which rippled in like thin blades of crystal over the spangled sand, were the little boats, the trollers, *al volanti,* tiny spry craft that looked like chicks of the heavy boats lying, in the row behind, in pairs of the same size and color—*barcas del bòu.* In the third file, the retired veterans of the shore, old hulks, their sides wide open, their worm-eaten ribs showing through the black gaps, reminded one of the decrepit nags used in the bull

ring, and lay meditating, it seemed, on the ingratitude of men who do so little for deserving old age.

Rust-colored nets, with flannel shirts and trousers of yellow baize, were strung along most of the masts; and above this array of color, some gulls, apparently drunk with sunshine, were leisurely planing in wide circles, occasionally dropping for a moment into the sea, where the water was shivering and seething in blebs of light under the high noon.

The Rector was talking about the weather, letting his yellowish eyes wander sleepily and placidly over the sea and down the coast. Along the green horizon line some pointed sails dotted the sky like wings of doves that might have been drinking off there. The shore at this point receded, forming a bight in the land, with masses of green and clusters of white cottages alternating along the coast. Here were the hills of the Puig, big swellings in the low-lying strand, which the sea sometimes swept over in its angry moods. And there was the castle of Sagunto, its wavy ramparts curling up and down along the summit of the ridge of caramel brown. Beyond that, and closing the horizon shoreward, was the sawtoothed Cordillera, with ripples of red granite, its unmoving crests reaching up to lap the sky like tongues.

Yes, the good weather had come early that year! You could take it from the Rector! Everybody from the Cabañal knew that, in such matters, he

had inherited from his master, *tio* Borrasca, an instinct that never failed. A puff or two next week, a bit of chop, but nothing much! The stormy season was over ahead of time, thank heaven, and a fellow could earn an honest day's pay without fear of putting to sea.

The Rector talked drawlingly, biting at a black "cardoon" from a smuggler's stock, his whole being swallowed up in the majestic slumber of the shore. Above the peaceful lulling whispers of the sea, the voice of a girl came from far away, up from under the ground, it seemed, chanting the monotonous cadence of a hoisting song: *Oh . . . oh . . . isa!* and a number of boys would tug at the mast they were stepping, pulling all together at the proper beat in the sleepy rhythm. It was dinner time; and tangle-haired women kept calling in shrill notes from the galley doors; for the "cats" were off gadding in the barn, looking at the oxen. In every direction the heavy mallets of calkers could be heard hammering away in deadening regularity. And all these noises evaporated, as it were, into the vast, light-filled calm, where sounds and things took on outlines of fantastic indistinctness.

Tonet studied his brother's face expectantly, waiting for that phlegmatic fellow, to whom words came so hard, to finish formulating his proposal.

At last the Rector came to the point. In two

words, he was tired of making money penny by penny and day by day. He wanted to make a killing as so many others had done. There was a living in the sea for any man. Some people ate bread black, after sweating for it; others took it white and without the crust, for a moment's work—but risking something! You get the idea, eh, Tonet!

But the Rector did not wait for Tonet's reply. He got up and walked to the bow of the old boat, to see if any one were eavesdropping on the other side.

Not a soul! The beach was deserted as far as the eye could see, away along to the bath-houses at the resort, where the Valencians came to play in summer. Beyond lay the harbor, prickly with masts from the shipping, and flags everywhere, a maze of cross-trees and yards, red and black smokestacks and cranes that looked like gibbets. Seaward stretched the Breakwater, a cyclopean wall of red bowlders heaped up in confusion to make a lee on that storm-swept shore. As background to the whole scene, the tall buildings of the Grao, warehouses, office buildings,—the aristocracy and money of the port; and then a long straight line of roofs, the *Cabañal,* the *Cañamelar,* the *Cap de Fransa,* a rambling agglomeration of many colored houses, less close together as they left the water, summer places in front with many stories and slender cupolas, white cabins behind, where the farm land began, the thatched cover-

ings of the huts rumpled by the strong sea winds.

There were no spies around. The Rector sat down again at his brother's side.

His wife had put the idea into his head. He had thought it over carefully, and come to the conclusion it was a good one. A trip "across the way," as people remembered his father used to say, over to the *costa d'afora,* to Algiers! No fishing, you understand. Fish aren't always around when you need them most. No, not that! But a cargo of contraband, the boat crammed to the decks with *alguilla* and *flor de mayo,* God of Gods! There, *rediel,* was business for you! And that was what the old man had done a thousand times. Well, what did Tonet say?

The honest Rector, who would never have dreamed of breaking a town ordinance or a harbor rule, laughed like a saint in heaven at the thought of that haul of tobacco which for days and days had been dancing before his eyes, till now he could actually see the fragrant bundles standing there wrapped in burlap on the sand. He was a son of the Spanish coast, proud of the deeds of his ancestors. In his eyes smuggling was the one thing a self-respecting sailor could take up when he got tired of fishing.

Tonet thought it was a bright idea. He had made two trips like that, though as ordinary seaman. Now that business was dull on the wharves, and *tio*

Mariano hadn't gotten him that job in the coast and harbor survey he had wanted so, there was no reason why he shouldn't go along with his brother.

The Rector rounded out the plan. The most important thing he had already—his own boat, *la Garbosa.* Tonet gasped with surprise, so the Rector enlarged further on that detail. Of course he realized the tub was broken amidships, the ribs strained, the deck warped and sagging in the middle —squeaking like an old guitar every time a sea went under her, ready for breaking up, about. But they hadn't fooled him, they hadn't fooled him! Thirty *duros,* he had paid, not a cent more. And the firewood in her was worth that much. But she would keep afloat under men who knew the taste of salt water. For his part, he could negotiate that pond in a shoe with the tap gone! Besides, you see,—and he gave a knowing wink—if the revenue people caught them and confiscated the boat—well, thirty *duros!* And that clinched the argument for the wily Rector. Not a thought of the chance he was taking with his life in such a sieve!

The crew? . . . Himself, his brother, and two men he knew and could trust. That was all there was to that. Now all he needed to do was have a talk with *tio* Mariano, who was on the inside track down in Algiers, as an old hand at the business. And like a man who has his mind made up and is afraid he'll change it if he waits too long, he thought he would

go at once to see that influential personage whom they both could be mighty proud to call their uncle. They would probably find him—it was around noon you see—up at the *Carabina,* where he usually went to sit a while and smoke.

And the two brothers started off in that direction. On walking past the ox-barn they glanced casually at the tavern-boat, blacker and more ramshackle every day. *Adiós, mare!* They had caught sight of their mother's glossy wrinkly face peering over the counter in front of the opening into the wine store, her head swathed as usual in a white kerchief like a coif. Some dirty underfed sheep were browsing the marsh grass near the first houses of the village. From the pools of fresh water behind the dunes frogs were croaking in monotone, their *garumps* faintly blending with the murmuring of the surf. Wine-colored nets, the warps festooned with cork toggles, were spread out on the sand, and among them some young roosters were pecking about or grooming their shiny feathers, all agleam with a metallic rainbow luster. Along the drain from the Gas House a number of women on hands and knees were scrubbing clothes or washing dishes in a pestilential water that stained the stones on its edges black. Here was the frame of a new boat about which some carpenters were pounding, and from a distance the skeleton of unpainted timber looked like the remains of some prehistoric saurian.

Across the drain, some rope-walkers, hanks of hemp about their waists, were backing away from the lathe, letting the yellow strands revolve between their deft fingers. And then the Cabañal, so called from the miserable cabins there which sheltered the very poorest of all those toilers of the sea! The streets were as straight and regular as the buildings were capricious, of every shape and size. The red-brick sidewalks went joyously up and down at different levels according to the height of the door sills on the huts. The roads were sloughs of mud, with deep ruts, and puddles from rain that had fallen weeks before. Two rows of dwarf olive trees brushed the heads of passersby with their dusty branches, and ropes were stretched from trunk to trunk to serve as clothes-lines for the wash of the water-front, which was waving like a regalia of banners in the fresh sea-breeze.

Cabins alternated with tenements of several stories. Those incorrigible tars could not forget the water-line even when they were ashore, for all the buildings were finished off with spar-varnish, and painted in two colors, like boats. Many a front door had a figurehead carved in wood, as though that portal were the bow-sprit of the sailor's habitation, which, in all its details of architecture, of color and line, called up memories of life at sea. The village looked like a collection of grounded craft. In front of some of the cabins stout masts with

pulleys had been set up, and the pulley and mast meant that there lived a skipper of a pair of *bòu*-boats. At the top of the staffs, the most complicated tackle was out drying, waving in the wind like the majestic emblem of a consul. The Rector eyed those poles in envy unconcealed. When would that Christ up at the Grao answer his prayer so that he could plant a mast like that in front of his door in honor of Dolores?

Now the drain had come to an end. They were well into the village, in the section where people from Valencia had their summer cottages. The houses here were low studded, with bulging gratings, painted green, over the windows. Everything was closed and silent. Footsteps echoed back across the broad sidewalks as in an abandoned town. Tufted plane trees were languishing in the solitude, pining for the gay nights of summer when there was laughing everywhere, people running about, and a piano banging in every cottage. Now scarcely any one was in sight. An occasional villager went by, in his pointed cap, with his hands in his pockets, and his pipe in his mouth, sauntering lazily toward this tavern or that; for the cafés were the only places where anything was going on.

The *Carabina,* for instance, was crowded. Under the awning in front were any number of blue coats, black silk caps, and weather-beaten countenances. Dominoes were rattling on the tables, and though

everything was open to the air, the strong smell of gin and tobacco struck you in the face.

Tonet had pleasant memories of the place—the scene of his triumphs in generosity in the first months of his marriage to Rosario.

At one of the stands sat *tio* Mariano, pulling at his pipe and waiting, probably, for the sheriff, or some other town notable, to enjoy the usual afternoon chat. He was listening in disdainful condescension to *tio* Gori, an old ship-carpenter from down the beach, who had been going to that café every afternoon for twenty years, to read the newspaper aloud, advertisements and all, to a greater or smaller number of sailors, according to the chance offshore; and the men would sit there silent and attentive till nightfall.

"So then, if you are ready, gentlemen . . . *Siñor* Segasta has something to say to us to-day. . . ."

But *tio* Gori held up his reading to observe to the man next to him:

"That Segasta is a humbug, you know!"

And with that comprehensive annotation, he adjusted his spectacles, and the Premier's speech in the Cortes began to unwind, syllable by syllable, from under the carpenter's white tobacco-stained mustache:

"Gen-tle-men-of-the-Cham-ber! In-re-ply-to-what-the-Hon-o-ra-ble-De-pu-ty-said-yes-ter-day. . . ."

But before getting to the reply, the carpenter

again looked up from his paper and, with a smile of canny superiority, observed to his speechless expectant audience:

"That is a d——d lie!"

Though the Rector had also spent whole afternoons at the feet of that man of letters, he now failed to notice *tio* Gori at all. Respectfully and obediently, he advanced, instead, directly toward his uncle, who had gone so far as to take the pipe out of his mouth to call to his nephews with an: "Hey there, boys!" and motion to them to take the chairs he had been keeping for his influential friends. Tonet sat down with his back to his brother and uncle, so as to follow the fast game of dominoes that was rattling in a lively fashion at the next table. At times his eyes would wander off through the smoky atmosphere toward the bar, where the pretty daughter of *tio* Carabina—for him the principal attraction of the café—was serving drinks under a line of marine chromos.

Señor Mariano *el Callao*—though no one dared use that last epithet in his hearing—was getting on toward sixty, but was still a muscular and rather handsome man, with a weather-beaten face, bloodshot eyes, a gray mustache as stiff and long and prickly as a tom-cat's whiskers, and the general bullying air of an uneducated lout who had money enough to live on without working. People had dubbed him *el Callao* because at least a dozen times

every day he told the story of that famous battle for the Peruvian seaport—the last that Spain relinquished in South America—which he had witnessed as an ordinary seaman on the *Numancia.* In these narratives he mentioned the admiral, Mendez Nuñez, in every other sentence,—"and don Casto says to me, says he"—as if the hero had had him for his most intimate friend and right-hand man. What delighted his audiences invariably, however, was his description of the actual combat, with imitations of a broadside from his glorious frigate: *boom! boo-oo-oo-oo—m!*

In addition *tio* Mariano was one of the big men about town. He had been a smuggler in the happy days when revenue agents, from Captain of the Port to ordinary patrolman, had hands but never eyes. And even now, when things were not so lax, he would take a passive share in some enterprise of the sort. But his principal activity was doing charity —lending the fishermen, or their wives, advances on their pay at fifty per cent a month; and this had given him a grip on the throats of the poorest elements along shore, so that he could deliver their vote bodily in every election campaign. His nephews could hardly contain their pride when they heard him calling mayors and sheriffs by their first names, or saw him, even, going up to Valencia in his best clothes and a top hat, as member of a committee of leading citizens, to wait on the Governor.

A grasping, heartless Shylock, *tio* Mariano had a scent for loosening his purse strings at the right moment. He knew the inside workings of every home for miles around. The Rector and Tonet, who owed him nothing but the hope they had of inheriting something when he died, thought him the most respectable and kindly man in the whole village, though very seldom had they been admitted to his pretty house on Queen street, *Calle de la Reina,* where he lived alone with a good-looking housekeeper, the only person in town who dared talk back to him, and was intimate enough with his affairs even to know where he kept his "pile."

Tio Mariano listened to the Rector with eyes half closed and a vertical line knit between his eyebrows. "Be d——d, be d——d! Of course! Not a bad idea at all, not at all!" That's the way he liked people—with some gumption! And he seized the occasion to brag of his own biography as a fool successful in getting rich, telling how he had left the navy without a cent in his pocket, and, to get out of the rut his father and grandfather had been in as fishermen, had started off on the underground route to Gibraltar and Algiers, to do his bit toward keeping business going and to give people something else to smoke besides the stink-weed forced on the public by the government! Thanks to the Lord, who had stood by him through thick and thin, and to his own guts—don't forget that—he

had made a little something—enough to keep him from worrying in his old age! But times weren't what they had been! The revenue men were now in charge of young navy officers just off the school-ships, with all sorts of stuck-up ideas in their heads and ears a yard long to catch any talk that was going around; and not a one of them would keep his eyes shut for an hour, if you paid him half his weight in gold. Why, last month they had caught three boats coming from Marseilles with a cargo of cloth! You had to be careful, you had to be careful! Too much blabbing going on all the time. The Q. T., that was the watchword! The Rector had made up his mind? Well, then, straight ahead! His Uncle Mariano would not be the man to throw cold water on an idea like that. He wanted the boys in his family to have ambition and try to get somewhere in the world. Poor old Pascualo would have turned out better if he'd stuck to that business and not gone back to fishing!

Well, how much did the Rector need? Quite frank now!—as though he were talking to a father. If it had been a matter of fishing, not a penny. Hell of a trade for a fellow, that, where you killed yourself working and died poor as a rat. But for something of that other kind, all he wanted, all he wanted! Somehow or other, this business of cheating the government always appealed to *tio* Mariano! A man's job!

The Rector timidly outlined what he thought he ought to have, stopping every other word, as though he were afraid of asking too much. But his uncle took the short cut to the conclusion. Boat? He had the boat. Very well! He, *tio* Mariano, would see to all the rest. He would drop a line to some friends of his on the "market" at Algiers. They would give the Rector a good load on credit, and if he were spry and got it ashore all right, a way would be found to sell it. "Thanks ever so much, uncle, *grasies, tio! Que bo es vosté!* It's certainly nice of you." And the Rector's eyes were almost running over with tears. But *tio* Mariano didn't like sentiment. What was he in the family for? He always had poor Pascualo on his mind. What a way to die! There was a man of pluck for you! Oh, by the way, the Rector would get a full third of the proceeds . . . seeing he was one of the family. . . . You couldn't stick on your full rights with a boy of your own flesh and blood! And the Rector, still moved at his uncle's lavish kindness, nodded grateful assent.

They sat on in silence for a while. Tonet was all taken up with the game nearby, and did not try to follow the conversation which the two men were carrying on, as much with their eyes, almost, as with their lips, which hardly moved.

And when were they intending to start, *tio* Mariano went on. Right away, he supposed; so he had

better get his letter off without delay. The Rector assured him, however, it would be out of the question to sail before Easter-Saturday. He would be better pleased to leave earlier in the week, but there was that procession to the Sepulcher with the body of Christ on Good Friday, and he had promised to lead the mob of "Jews." Something he couldn't really miss. Been in the family years and years—that part in the ceremonies of Holy Week, and many people were waiting for a chance to get it. The hangman's costume he wore for that occasion had belonged to his father.

Though *tio* Mariano passed for an infidel in town, because the curate never got a red cent out of him on any pretext, he nodded solemn approval of his nephew's pious intention. Quite right, quite right —everything in its own time and place! The Rector and his brother rose to their feet on seeing that the august personages their uncle had been expecting were approaching. They could depend on him, then. Yes, and another talk later on to fix on the last details. Would they have a little something? What? Not been to dinner yet? Well, it would be waiting for them at home, probably! *Hasta la vista, chiquets!* And the two boys walked slowly off down the deserted sidewalk on their way back to the cabin district.

"And what did uncle say?" Tonet asked casually.

The Rector, who never wasted any words if he could help it, moved his head up and down vertically. Tonet beamed with excited joy. A sure thing, then! Fine! Pascualo was at last on the road to money, and he, well, at least, he could see his way through the summer. The good-natured Rector kept reflecting to himself on what an unselfish fellow his brother was, and almost felt like hugging him. Yes, that boy's heart was in the right place! Fond as could be of him and of Dolores, and he loved little Pascualet as though the baby were his own child! If only their two wives could get along together a little better. . . .

CHAPTER IV

MARY AND JESUS MEET

THOUGH the early morning sky was bright and cloudless, the streets of the Cabañal were rumbling as in a thunderstorm. People jumped out of bed as the crashing almost split their eardrums; and good women of the village, their hair still down and in wrappers hastily thrown on, went out on the sidewalk in front of their doors to see what was going on. The bluish transparency of dawn was barely gilded with the rays of the still invisible sun. But the "Jews of Jerusalem" were on a rampage, banging their harsh cymbals together as they marched along the streets. One would have thought the Calendar had suddenly gone mad and transported Carnival to Easter week. The most grotesque horribles were gathering in the squares. The young folks of the town were out in costume; for the procession of the *Encuentro,* in the environs of Valencia, is virtually a masquerade.

Far down the long street, what looked like an army of cockroaches could be seen assembling, figures, called *las vestas,* in tall, black, sharp-pointed

hoods, like so many astrologers, or judges of the Inquisition, their cloth masks rolled up over their foreheads, their long black trains hung over their arms, and each with a baton painted black in one hand. Some of the paraders, to add a touch of ingenuity, had slipped white petticoats on, well ironed and pleated, and from under them pairs of trousers protruded with the legs turned up, and, at the very bottom, top-shoes unutterably tormenting enormous feet accustomed to walking bare on the sands.

Then came the "Jews," fierce villains apparently snatched from some lowly stage for dramas of the Middle Ages that could afford only a conventional costume of poor quality. Their induments were what the Valencian populace refers to as its "war trappings," short skirts or kilts, much mottled with spangles, trimmings and lace fringes, like the tunic of the Apaches; helmets topped off with huge cock plumes, arms and legs "armored" with a rude fabric of cotton tufts to give a distant suggestion of mail. To cap the climax of caricature and anachronism, following the *vestas* and the "Jews," came—tall and handsome fellows all—the "Virgin's Grenadiers," wearing high-fronted caps like those of Frederick's Prussian guards, with black uniforms decorated with silver lace that must surely have been ripped from the caskets in an undertaker's store.

A stranger might have laughed at that naïf array had he dared brook the wrath of those solemn boys whose faces all wore expressions of stern professional seriousness. It is never safe to make fun of an army ready to fight; and these "Jews" and "grenadiers" who were to guard the crucified Christ and his mother were carrying, unsheathed in their hands, all the varieties of sword known from the dawn of history to the present time, beginning with the heavy cavalry saber of the ordinary marcher, to the slender, delicate rapier of the drum-major.

Following the march, or keeping up with it along its flanks, trooped the gamins of the town, enviously studying the colorful uniforms. Mothers, sisters and sweethearts looked on admiringly from their doorways: "There he is, there! Do you see him? *Reina y siñora!* How grand he looks!" The devout procession, like the parade that heralds the coming of a circus to town, seemed to recall to the sinful, backsliding population of the Cabañal that at seven A. M. sharp Jesus and his mother would meet—hence the name *Encuentro*—in the middle of the Calle de San Antonio, in front of the "Side of Bacon," the tavern of *tío Chulla*.

As the twilight brightened into the rosy glow of sunrise, promising a warm spring day, the martial uproar about the village grew. There were drums, cornets and brass horns sounding on every hand. An army seemed suddenly to have descended on the

Cabañal. The various companies—*collas,* as they are called—had formed four abreast, and solemn, stiff, and as much admired as soldiers returning from victory, were marching to the homes of their respective captains to collect the banners displayed there—weird standards of black velvet embroidered with the horrifying symbols of the Passion.

The Rector was hereditary captain of the "Jews," and long before dawn he had gotten up and crammed his person into the handsome costume that was kept securely locked in a chest at other times of the year and was revered by the whole family as the treasure of the house. Lord help us! What are we coming to! Every Easter the poor Rector was getting fatter and fatter and finding it a more and more serious task to stuff his corpulency into that tight-fitting "coat-of-mail." Dolores, in her night-gown and with her hair down, was making the tour of his spacious waist, pushing in the stomach here, and stretching the cloth there, to make room for one more cubic inch of husband inside the cotton armor. On the bed sat little Pascualet gazing in amazement and alarm at that helmet with Indian plumes on the man's head and at that menacing cavalry saber which clanked against the walls and the furniture every time the Rector turned around. Could that be papa?

At last the dread toilette was over. Not exactly what you would call comfortable, but they had

spent enough time over it. The Rector's underwear, at odds with the stringency encircling it, was all lumpy, and what looked like tumors could be seen standing out under the "Jew's" stockings. And those trousers! They were so tight around the middle that the poor man could hardly breathe. His helmet, far too small for his head, kept slipping forward and bumping on his nose. But this was a day for dignity, not for ease! And the Rector drew his saber, struck up a rub-a-dub-dub in his stentorian voice, and began to stride up and down the room, as though the baby there were a crown prince reviewing guard. His wife's golden, mysterious eyes followed him as he walked back and forth from one wall of the bedroom to the other like a bear in a cage. She was tempted to laugh at those bandy legs; but no—she liked him better in that costume than in the tarred and pitchy clothes he came home from work in at night, tired out and stupid from toil.

And now they were coming! The "Jews" could be heard, with their band, down the street. They would be wanting their banner. Dolores hastily threw a wrapper on, while the captain advanced to the frontiers of his domain to welcome his army. The lurid company drew up in front of the house. The drum-beat softened in tone, but continued to give the rhythm for the privates who stood there marking time, keeping their heads and bodies and

legs moving energetically in space but without moving from their positions. Tonet and two other "Jews" came gravely forward, entered the house, and started for the second story, whence the standard was hanging from a window.

Dolores met her brother-in-law on his way upstairs, and instantly, instinctively, she drew the overwhelming comparison. There was a real soldier, a general! Tonet had something about him that distinguished him from the uncouthness and clumsiness of the others—of the other. His legs were straight, and his stockings had no wrinkles—everything in his make-up was stylish, well fitting, sleek. He belonged to the Juan Tenorios, the royal don Pedros, the Henri Lagardères, she had seen on the stage of the theater of La Marina, reciting verses and fighting duels that had thrilled her to the bottom of her soul.

And now all the *collas* were off toward the church, their bands and banners in front of them, looking, from a distance, like troops of glossy insects moving up and down in the rhythm of the march. The *Encuentro* was at hand! Two processions were coming down different streets. In one was the Virgin, weeping, sorrowful, escorted by her guard of funereal grenadiers; in the other, Jesus, in a showy purple mantle spangled with gold, his hair awry, his face stained with blood, collapsing under the burden of the Cross. The image had

fallen on the rocks of painted cork that covered its pedestal. Around the Christ, to prevent his escape, crowded the ruthless "Jews," who, in line with their parts, had marshaled ferocious scowls; and with the "Jews" came the *vestas,* their masks lowered now and their trains dropped and dragging through the puddles. The whole scene was so dreadful, so awe-inspiring, that children along the road began to scream and to hide in fright behind their mothers' skirts.

Siñor! . . . Ay, siñor, Deu meu! . . . the old fisherwomen murmured sympathetically at sight of the bleeding Christ in the clutches of that mob of infidels.

The low-pitched cymbals were clanging meanwhile, and the cornets were shrieking long-sustained, ear-splitting blasts like the bellowing of calves in a slaughter-house. In the midst of the throng of cruel guards marched some tall, well-built girls, with painted cheeks, and in costumes copied from the Turkish maidens of comic opera. They carried water jugs to show they were the Biblical women from Samaria. From their mothers they had borrowed earrings and breast-pins. Their plump legs were ostentatiously exposed in open-work stockings under short Polish peasant skirts. But this was not the occasion for mocking raillery from the men in the crowds.

Among the spectators, to be sure, were a few pale

faces and blue-ringed eyes—revelers who had been up all night and, to finish their carousals, had come down from Valencia to witness the famous popular festival. But if such people ventured a smile at any incongruity in the costumes, a soldier of Pilate would step up and raise his saber menacingly, calling them to order in righteous indignation:

"*Morrals! Morrals!* Hey, there, you pig! This is not a joke! The idea! The most religious ceremony of the coast, and as old as the Cabañal itself! You're no gentleman! You must come from Valencia. But I'll teach you manners, if you don't behave yourself!"

The "meeting" place, on a crossing of the Calle de San Antonio, along which, every now and then, some tiles of curious design had been placed to mark the stations of the march to Calvary, was drawing the bulk of the crowd. Rough, aggressive shore-women, in checkered shawls and with kerchiefs on their heads for hats, were competing restlessly for places in the front line.

Among a group of older ones Rosario was stoutly defending her excellent position on the sidewalk with her elbows and her knees. Had they seen her Tonet? Not a "Jew" in the whole lot to compare with him! And in all this enthusiasm for her handsome husband, the poor woman was still rubbing the bruises he had inflicted on her that morn-

ing in the course of getting his costume out and on. But suddenly Rosario felt a rude shove which brushed her aside, while a compact, muscular female body crowded into the place she had been occupying. She looked around. Did any one ever hear of such brazen impudence! It was Dolores, leading Pascualet by the hand! They had at last forced their way through the crushing throng. The comely girl still had her usual pout of disdain as she looked at people and carried herself with her habitual queenly pride. The harlot! Yet how everybody made way for her and fawned upon her in spite of her conceit!

To the exceeding alarm of *tia* Picores, the two women stood there frowning at each other angrily. Their reconciliation some days before in the ice-cream place had been nothing but a truce. They had promised to be good friends, but without much warmth, and one could see from the looks in their eyes at the time that there would be trouble again soon. Rosario, taken aback by the violence of the push that had displaced her, rested content with a grimace. What nice manners some people had! Some people wanted the earth with a fence around it! Gangway for Her Majesty the Queen! Well, there are people and people in this world! And the wrong sort reveal themselves—you don't have to bother to point them out.

As the pale, sickly woman muttered on, her face

grew redder and redder with the intoxication of her own words. Her friends near by kept nudging her, egging her on to stand her ground. Dolores, meanwhile, began to toss her gorgeous head like a lioness preparing to cuff at a hornet buzzing behind her back. However, the processions were debouching into the square, and a wave of expectancy swept over the multitude.

Slowly the two lines of celebrants approached each other, measuring their steps so as to reach the designated spot at exactly the same moment. The sun was darting its first golden rays upon the purple robe of Jesus, the maze of plumes, helmets and upraised swords of the guards—one bright, sparkling brilliancy. From the other direction came the Virgin, bobbing up and down on her throne in rhythm with the footsteps of her bearers, dressed in a black velvet gown with widow's weeds, some big wax tears glistening on her face, and—to catch them, supposedly—a black-bordered mourning handkerchief in her stiff, lifeless hands. She it was who riveted the attention of all the mothers present. Many of them began to weep. *Ay reina y soberana!* How she must be suffering! A mother finding her boy in a fix like that! Suppose I should meet my boy—do you see him over there, and isn't he handsome?—handcuffed, and on the way to the penitentiary! And I'm only an ordinary mother! The fisherwomen were now groaning and weeping all

around the square, not forgetting, meanwhile, to study the Virgin's costume for any improvement or shortcoming as compared with the year before.

The exciting moment was now at hand. The drums ceased beating, the cornets interrupted their dolorous bleating, and the bands were hushed. The images of Jesus and Mary were face to face. A plaintive, tremulous voice began to recite in monotone some stanzas which told how very sad and mournful the whole scene was. *Tio* Grancha, an aged velvet-spinner, came down from Valencia every year to declaim those couplets, and his art was one of the attractions of the festival! What a voice! How it went to your heart! And that is why a riot almost started when some gamblers in the "Side-of-Bacon" began to laugh at a turn in their game, and people rushed to the doors exclaiming angrily:

"Shut up . . . shut up . . . you vermin!"

The images tilted back and forth, in symbolic pantomime of desperate and sorrowful farewell!

Meanwhile, Dolores could not take her eyes off the arrogant, elegant "Jew" who contrasted so favorably with his bandy-legged captain. She was standing with her back toward Rosario, but that did not prevent the latter from divining the object of her gaze. And did you see that? A married woman making eyes at a married man, and right in the presence of her husband! And all this in

public! And what went on in private, when that Tonet went to her house on the pretext of playing with the baby, and found her alone?

The two processions had now joined and were going back toward the church. The jealous, infuriated woman continued, in a half-audible voice, to hurl her insulting tirade over those broad, exuberant shoulders in front of her—a splendid pedestal for a beautiful head with luxuriant hair. Dolores turned around with a smirk of biting ridicule on her face. Beg pardon! Had all that been for her? When would that dirty scullion stop annoying a lady? Couldn't a person look at a parade without being insulted? And a glitter of gold sparkled with a wicked gleam in the pupils of her sea-green eyes.

Yes, came the reply. It had all been for her, every word! An immoral, impudent wench, who was always eyeing other women's husbands! Dolores laughed contemptuously. Thanks! Rosario could keep her husband, for all she cared. What a jewel he was, besides! She had her own man and that was enough for her. Tonet might do for other women, if they were fool enough to take him on. But for the thief there's nobody in the world but thieves! No, madam, her job in life was not stealing husbands, but slapping the faces of lying gossips who talked too much!

"Mare, Mare!" screamed Pascualet, clinging to the skirts of his beautiful mother, who, her dark skin

pale as death, had drawn herself up to her full height preparing to throw herself upon her enemy. Rosario, meanwhile, was struggling to shake off a number of women who were holding her pinioned by her weak, flaccid arms.

"What's going on here? At it again, eh?" It was the harsh, scolding voice of *tia* Picores, who had interposed her towering form between the combatants. She would settle the row! She knew how to handle those hot-heads. "You, Dolores, home with you! And you, you groveling, lying slanderer, get out of my sight and hearing." And with a shove and a threat, first in one direction and then the other, she put them both to rout.

Lord, Lord, what people! And on Good Friday! On Good Friday! And right in front of Mary and Jesus! God might forgive them, but she wouldn't! The thousandth time! And that's the way they bring up girls nowadays. And when the stern old woman saw that the younger ones were still shouting insults at each other from a distance, she went at them again, shaking her fists and calling them names, till they were dragged away by their partisans.

The quarrel was soon the talk of all the Cabañal. After the services were over there was another disturbance in the household of Tonet, who, without waiting to take his costume off, thrashed his wife within an inch of her life for making a fool of him

in public. And the Rector also brought the subject up while Dolores was prying him out of his uniform, and his flesh was gradually resuming its normal rotundity. He was sorry to say so, but that poor Rosario was crazy. Tonet might be all he might be—and it was true that brandy didn't do him any good! Just the same, it was a pity to see him tied to a woman about as easy to handle as a porcupine. But a brother was a brother in his eyes! He wasn't going to break with the son of his own father just to please that fool of a woman! Much less at that particular moment, when there would be a chance to make a real man of Tonet. Dolores, though hardly yet recovered from the excitement of the brawl, nodded approval to all he said.

And the Rector thought no more about it. He had that little matter on his mind. And, in fact, the following day, just as the bells were ringing for the service of Holy Saturday, while revolvers were being fired in festive celebration about town, and gamins were going from house to house beating upon front doors with sticks, *la Garbosa,* that leaky death-trap hardly able to keep afloat, with a complete outfit for fishing aboard to make her look like a seiner, raised her huge lateen sail, new and strong and white, and slipped away from the beach of the Cabañal, taking the first sea swells like a time-worn beauty, frilled and painted up to make one last conquest.

CHAPTER V

TWO WOMEN QUARREL

It had stopped raining about daybreak. At five o'clock the street lamps of Valencia were still burning, their flickering lights mirrored red as blood in the puddles of the uneven pavement. The irregular line of house-tops was just beginning to stand out against an ashen background of sky brightening with the first glow of morning. The night watchmen were unhooking their lanterns from their stations at the street-crossings and walking off, stamping their chilled feet after wishing a listless *bon dia* to the pairs of hooded policemen who would not be relieved until seven o'clock. Faint from the distance through the stillness came the whistling of the morning trains leaving the suburbs. The church towers were beginning to clang with the first calls to the mass of sunrise, some of the bells droning and indistinct like the voices of old women, others shrill and high pitched like the chirping of children. From roof to roof—their city quarters—cocks were exchanging strident challenges to battle.

And now the deserted, rain-soaked streets were

slowly awakening with the strangely resonant sounds of footsteps, as the earliest risers stepped out upon the sidewalks, though the closed doors and the grated windows still transmitted the subdued murmur of a city in the last heavy breathings of tranquil slumber. The sky was growing gradually brighter as if numberless thin veils were being torn asunder one by one from across the pathway of the invisible sun. A gray, cold pallor was stealing over the darker alleys and side streets, while, like a fade-in on the cinema screen, the contours of the town began to come into clearer view: the fronts of the houses shining from their recent drenching; the eaves dripping with the last few drops of rain; the roofs gleaming like polished silver; the trees along the broader avenues, naked and shorn as brooms, shaking their leafless branches, while water seemed to ooze from their fungus-covered trunks.

The Gas House of Valencia, weary from its sustained labors of a night, was snorting with the last puffs of steam. The huge gasometers were sinking low between their steel girders; and the tall brick chimney was throwing out its final belches of thick black smoke, which spread curling over the field of space in an ever-widening blotch. In the neighborhood of the Sea Bridge, the customs agents, burying their faces in their mufflers, were walking up and down to shake off the damp chill of the morning. Through the windows of the revenue office

the clerks who had just arrived could be seen moving their sleepy heads to and fro.

They had been waiting there for the vendors to come into town—a quarrelsome crew trained to haggling and embittered by poverty, ready, for the difference of a centime, to spend a limitless capital of swear-words and insults, and never successful in reaching market without a string of brawls with the guards who laid the duties on their goods. The produce wagons and the milch cows with their rattling bells had gone through before daybreak. Only the fisherwomen were still to come, a noisy flock of witches, dirty, slimy, in rags, making the air ring with their shrieks and wrangling, stinking to heaven with dead fish and all the odors of shore life which clung to their uncouth petticoats.

It was broad day, and the light, now harsh and blue, was throwing every object into a clean-cut outline up against the leaden sky, when, with a lazy tinkle of distant bells, four *tartanas* hove in view, making their way toward the Sea-Bridge, drawn by wretched nags that seemed able to keep their feet only because the drivers, huddled low in their seats, their coat collars turned up over their ears, kept pulling at the reins. The black bodies of the two-wheeled wagons pitched about over the ruts in the road like old belly-cracked boats tossing at the mercy of the waves. The wagon-hoods showed their reed framework here and there through the rents in their

tarred canvas. Plasters of red paste covered some of the smaller holes. The ironwork was squeaky and broken, the breaks repaired with strings. The wheels were splashed and scaly with the winter's mud. Outfits, decidedly, that had seen better days!

The front openings of the wagon-coverings were protected by flaps, painted, for one trace of ornament, at least, in a red, now faded. Looking into the vehicles from behind, where everything was open, the *señoras* of the Fishmarket, sitting in rows with their baskets, might have been seen, each woman wearing a checkered shawl, with a colored kerchief covering breast and shoulders. So the rickety carts came on, leaving behind them as they passed a sickening stench of rotting sea-life. They tilted alarmingly as one wheel would sink into a deep hole, till the wheel on the other side would find a chasm just as deep, and the hood careened in that direction.

The four *tartanas* pulled up in front of the office; and down over their steps numberless worn-out shoes, undarned stockings, dirty, protruding heels began to come, under a flutter of skirts caught up in front over yellow petticoats with black arabesques. The baskets were set down in line near the platform of the scales, each covered with a wet cloth. From underneath the strip of canvas shone the silver of a herring or the vermilion of a salmon, or the greenish blue of a lobster's claw, quivering

with the tremor of agony. Alongside the baskets lay the bigger fish, broad-tailed sea-bass, their circular jaws wide open, showing the white, round tongues and the dark throats, while their bodies were stretched backward, taut in the contraction of death; and flat, enormously wide skates, their fins spread out on the ground like kites of brown cloth, slimy and viscous to the touch.

The scales happened to be occupied by some out-of-town bakers, good-looking fellows with square leather aprons, their sleeves rolled up, and flour in their hair and eyebrows. They were weighing out bags of fresh, nutty bread, which seemed to bring a fragrance of life into that nauseating ambient of sea-carrion. Waiting for their turn, the fish-women were blarneying with customs men or idlers who stood about looking at the big fish with the curiosity of landlubbers. Meanwhile, other women were coming in on foot from down the coast, carrying their baskets on their heads or by the handles. The group was growing in numbers every minute, and the line of baskets now reached clear from the scales to the bridge.

The officials were getting bad-tempered with that snarling, loud-talking mob of harpies who wore them out every morning with their quarrelsomeness and unreasonable haggling. Every one of them shouted at you as if you had no ears, reënforcing every other word with an interjection from that

inexhaustible store of epithet native to the shores of the Mediterranean. Rivals, on meeting here again after a set-to on the beach the day before, would revive the passions of the unsettled argument, annotating insults with obscene gestures, emphasizing accusations with cadenced slapping of hands on thighs, or lifting clenched fists above their heads as if they were about to strike. And then, when you would think of calling the police, if not the undertaker, laughter, suddenly everywhere, as though the hens in a big hen coop had started cackling all at once! Some one of the combatants had scored with an unusually cutting or scurrilous phrase!

The bakers were slow in getting off the scales; so gibes began to rain on them; and they, for their part, were not the men to accept such taunts in silence. Indecencies, blasphemies, slanderous genealogies began to fly back and forth, though the deadliest thrusts seemed to rouse only friendly grins and guffaws.

Outstanding in the thickest of the riot, and the center of most attention, stood Dolores, *la del Retor,* as comely as usual and better dressed than any of the others, carelessly leaning against a corner of the office shanty, her arms folded behind her back, her magnificent bust thrown forward, smiling with satisfied complacency at the interested glances that

reached her tan shoes and the red stockings so blatantly advertising her well-shaped ankles. At the sharpest jokes she heard she opened her luscious lips and her man-eating jaws wide enough to show two rows of strong, even, pearl-white teeth that gave a suggestion of marble luminousness to her darkish features.

A girl of "prestige," obviously—and why not? A solid cuff in that plump right hand of hers, and a tongue in her head, I can tell you, when she had a mind to use it! The wife of Pascualo *el Retor,* besides, a good-natured fat-head who ate out of her hand and never dared peep inside his own house; but all there, when it came to making a living out of the sea—a pot of money, earned, every cent of it, by good, honest, straightforward fishing.

All this Dolores knew. And that, doubtless, was why she stood there with the self-possession of a Grand Duchess, surveying that dirty-mouthed, dirty-clothed rabble of the Fishmarket, and perking her lips disparagingly when some one noticed her real pearl earrings, or the Algerian scarf, or the red-flannel petticoat from Gibraltar the Rector had given her! In fact, the only woman she thought quite her class was "Granny" Picores, *agüela Picores,* a veteran of the Fishmarket, a whale of a woman, mastodontic, who cowed every policeman in the market with one glare from her incinerating

eyes, or one bellow from that cavernous mouth of hers, the center upon which all the wrinkles in her face converged.

"*Cristo,* when will you fools be through!" Dolores finally shouted at the bakers, her seductive arms akimbo. And the husky young men, moving a little slower than usual, if anything, answered in kind, but tossing their salacious repartees in the direction of the fish-hags who lined up around the scales with hands folded over protruding abdomens and adding a grotesque enlargement to those already conspicuous bulges. But at last the weighing of the fish could begin: "Hey there, me first, you ——!" "No, my turn, you ——!" "You were first yesterday!" The usual morning fight for precedence was on, waiting for arbitration by *tia* Picores, with her cannonading voice and formidable obscenities. But Dolores had not joined the squabble—she even missed the place her basket held, by rights, in the line. Something on the bridge had caught her eye; and, in fact, over the side rails of that structure the head and shoulders of a straggler could be seen advancing slowly, staggering along under the weight of a heavy load.

An expression of diabolical cruelty overspread the handsome countenance of Dolores; and when the laggart fish-woman had reached the nearer end of the bridge, near the customs office, the girl burst

into an insolent, ridiculing laugh. She touched *agüela* Picores on the arm:

"Look, granny, late as usual. And what can you expect from a mess of lazy-bones like that!"

Rosario grew pale as death, and it was with a sigh of faintness and fatigue that she set her basket on the ground. She looked at Dolores, with what hatred her exhaustion could let gather in her eyes. Then she sat down on the burden she had been carrying. For a second the two enemies surveyed each other from head to foot, their year-long resentment boiling up within them.

Dolores wiped her nose with an arm, snorting, as at a pinch of snuff. "Yes, I'd sit down, if I were you, mud-puppy. God, when Tonet was taking a wife, why didn't he get a woman!" Rosario did her best to parry the flood of insults: Sit down? Why not sit down—since God had given her something to sit on and she had a place to put it! Besides, an honest woman need not be afraid to be seen walking. She couldn't hire a coach-in-four—by playing fast and loose with her husband! "And it's me you're talking to!" exclaimed Dolores, stepping forward with blood in her eyes. But she did not go far. For her "Granny's" clawed talons were upon her shoulder, pulling her back. "Into the cart with you! Your fish is weighed! No public scenes to-day! It's late, and they want their orders up in the

Market! Of all the loving pairs of sisters! . . ." And the old Tartar was now in front of Dolores, thrusting the girl back toward the *tartana* with bumps from her huge stomach. But the beauty's lips were trembling white with emotion, though she obeyed; but with one foot on the step of the cart, she hurled back one parting shot:

"Tu, ya se vorem, Rosario!"

Have it out later? Of course they would. You say when, Dolores! And Rosario, her arms really so weak and flaccid, laid hold on a heavy basket in an impulse of rage and tossed it like a pebble on to the scales.

The clouds from the night's storm were burning off with the advent of the sun, which was making a triumphant entrance upon the day, rolling its molten gold horizontally over the streets, gilding the puddles, and painting the house fronts and window-panes with the reddening brilliancy of a conflagration. The town was now quite awake. The street-cars were crowded with people, and the sidewalks on either hand were lined with still drowsy laborers on their way to work, their lunch baskets hung over their shoulders and cigar butts in their mouths. Pairs of relief horses for the police were being driven through the street by boys riding bareback on one of their two steeds.

Servant girls were tripping along toward market. Street sweepers were busy at work on the mud the

rain had washed into the gutters, where cows at intervals were being milked. The sheet-iron coverings of store windows were being raised, letting the light in upon the colorful displays inside. Through open doors the scratching of brooms on floors could be heard, while clouds of dust came driving out, making Jacob's-ladders of the sunbeams.

When the *tartanas* reached the *Pescadería* the women porters there hurried out to meet them and help the sailors' wives unload. Servile before these latter, whom they regarded as bosses, they trooped in line through the narrow cell-like doors of the fish-portico, fetid air-holes, through which the stenches from inside poured out. The baskets were dumped on the marble flooring and the fish arranged in line on beds of seaweed. On every hand were trundles of big fish and barrels where the "produce" of the day before was packed in ice.

Across the market was another line of vendors, dressed in costumes like those from the Cabañal, but more miserable in appearance, if anything, and with more repulsive faces still. They were the women of Albufera, a strange concentration of poverty and degradation, housing in wretched shanties a people that lives among the reeds and mud of the lake marshes, fishing in the murky, shallow waters from black, bluff-bowed boats that look like coffins. On these ashen, weather-beaten features indigence was drawn in its most ghastly outlines. Every eye was

aglow with the wild gleam of fever; and the odors that came from clothes, here, had not the vigorous pungency of the open seashore, but the subtle nausea of swamp land and the infectious muck of stagnant pools. The bags these women were emptying on the tables were squirming masses of life. As the eels came out they twisted into rings of black slime, or wriggled on their white bellies, or lifted their pointed heads like snakes. Nearby, whitening, dead, lay the fresh-water fry, tench, for the most part, insufferably noisome, glittering with the subdued metallic luster of poisonous tropical fruit. Here, too, was a higher and lower caste in misery, for the least fortunate vendors of this section had seats, not at the tables, but on the floors, whence they were offering frogs strung on sticks with their four legs distended.

Business was just beginning in the Fishmarket. The customers were coming in, and mysterious signals were flying back and forth among the stalls mixed with strange words from the jargon of the fish-mongers. The inspectors were outside! As fast as possible false scales vanished under aprons or petticoats. Meanwhile, old and grimy knives were slitting the silvery bellies of the fish, the guts falling haphazard under tables or counters. An occasional dog would come running by, sniffing at the offals lying around and with a snort of disgust passing on toward the neighboring porticos, where

the butchers were holding forth. The fish-women who had been playfully twitting each other an hour before in their *tartanas* or at the customs house now sat watching each other, whenever a marketer came along, with hostile jealousy. An atmosphere of struggle, of relentless competition pervaded the ill-smelling, reeking environment. The women kept calling off their fish in shrill, piercing tones, or beating on their dirty scales to attract the attention of some possible purchaser. Smiles and quaint greetings of endearment would welcome the housewife as she came up; but if she found prices too high and passed on, a deluge of filthy epithet would follow after her, and the insolent ridicule would be taken up by the whole crew of vendors, instinctively standing together against the buyer.

Tia Picores, towering with the majesty of a battle-scarred whale in her tall armchair, sat twitching her wrinkly mustached lips and frequently changing position to get the full warmth of the brazier she kept daily burning at her feet till full summertime. As a veteran of the market, she had her regular trade and did not try overmuch to attract new customers. Her delight it was to take the lead in spitting curses upon the grumbling townswomen who went in person to do their shopping with their maids; and her drawling voice always had the last word in the disputes that went on. Her hair-raising obscenity and the apothegms from her philosophy

of shame, which she got off with the solemnity of an oracle, were the principal sources of mirth throughout the portico. The stall across the aisle in front of her belonged to Dolores, who worked with her sleeves rolled up, playing with the bright, gilded scales she owned or showing her beautiful teeth in coquettish smiles when men came by. For many gentlemen in town went marketing by themselves, filling their neat, red-edged baskets at her counter for the pleasure of a chat with the charming girl. Rosario, two tables beyond *tia* Picores, was busy putting the freshest of her wares to the fore. The two girls were thus face to face, though they avoided each other's eyes disdainfully, each turning her back when the other one looked her way, though immediately afterwards they would be staring impudently and angrily at each other again.

It was not long before a pretext for their daily quarrel was available. A man had stopped at Rosario's counter and was bargaining, when Dolores, with a vigorous rapping on her scales and one of her prettiest smiles, enticed him in her direction. "Thief! Thief! He was my customer—one of my best! And you've taken him away! I sell fish, I do; but you sell . . .!" And the pale, bony cheeks of the frail, overworked Rosario flamed red with spite and her gleaming eyes flashed fire. Dolores, drawing herself up to her most crushing height of haughtiness, seemed to sniff with her

chubby but handsome nose: "Huh! Thief! Never mind about thieves, darling! People here know who I am; and they know who you are; and if they come to me . . ."

The outlook for an interesting morning in the market suddenly improved. The fish-women brightened on every hand, even neglecting their custom to crane their necks and take in everything that was going on. With smiles of amusement, the customers began to crowd around, while the inspector, foreseeing what was coming, prudently slipped out, though he had scarcely begun his rounds. *Tia* Picores, in despair at such everlasting quarrelsomeness, contented herself with a resigned invocation to heaven. "Thief is what I said," Rosario resumed. "And everybody knows it. You want everything I've got, and I can prove it. Here you steal my customers and down at the Cabañal you steal . . . well, you steal . . . something else . . . something else. . . . She's not fooling me, I can tell you, even if she is pulling the wool over her husband's eyes . . . dolt that he is, fool of a Rector, who don't know his chin from his elbow." But Dolores was not moved from her patronizing self-possession. She could see from the faces of the onlookers that every one was wondering how she would take those allusions to herself and her good-natured husband; and she was not going to let the Fishmarket have a day's fun at her expense.

"Close your mouth, deary, before you slip and fall into it! Don't be bitter! You can't have all the men there are. "You're envious!" "Me, envious!" Rosario retorted. "Envious of your reputation, I suppose,—the best in the Cabañal, as even the lamp-post knows! Thanks! I'm a decent woman, I am. I never tried to get another girl's husband!" "And whose husband could you get with that sculpin-face? No, dearest, no one is jealous of you!" And Rosario, growing paler than ever, sunk her nails into her clenched hands, while Dolores, her fists on her hips, wreathed her delicious countenance in a smile, which seemed to serve for volumes of insults.

The joy of combat had taken possession of the whole portico. Idlers had gathered in throngs at the doors. The fish-women were leaning far forward over their counters with the eager appetites of furies, clacking their tongues as though they were sicking two dogs upon each other and banging on their scales to applaud each cutting thrust. It was time for Dolores to fall back on the *ultima ratio* of a fish-woman's contempt.

"Look, Rosario! Don't talk to me! Talk to this!"

And she turned squarely around and, bending slightly, registered a resonant slap on the pair of spacious hips that trembled under her calico skirt with all the elasticity of her firm flesh.

This *trovata* had immense success with the audi-

ence. Women fell from their chairs in the contortions of laughter. The tunny-men in the near section doubled up in the gripes of joy, while the hilarity found its outer boundaries in the meat-market, stalls and stalls away. Staid gentlemen from town set their baskets down to do full justice with their clapping hands to the beauty and the wit of the inimitable Dolores.

But the triumph of the Rector's wife was of short duration. As she looked around to see the effect her blow had had, a handful of sardines struck her full in the face. Rosario was blind with fury. "Come out of that stall! Show your face out here where I can get at you, you low-lived street-walker!" And Dolores did show her face. Rolling her sleeves up still higher, as though clearing for action, she strode forth from her stall, her eyes aglow with the enthusiasm of combat. Toward her Rosario came running, brushing aside the arms that tried to restrain her, aquiver with rage from head to foot and shrieking curse on curse.

They met in the wet, slippery passageway between the two lines of counters. Head down, the smaller woman rushed full tilt into her taller and sturdier antagonist. It was a shock of nerve on muscle. Dolores was scarcely stirred, and the blows Rosario rained on her did not seem even to ruffle her temper. Answering in kind, she began to deliver the most merciless slaps upon the pale, bony cheeks

of her assailant, which grew red under the punishment.

But suddenly Dolores shrieked in agony and raised both hands to one ear. "The dog! The dog!" she cried.

Rosario's fingers had closed over one of those pearl earrings that had been the admiration of the Fishmarket. She had torn it out. The pretty girl began to sob, pressing her torn ear under both her hands, while blood streamed through her fingers. "Was that the way to fight fairly?" she moaned. That showed the kind of woman she had to deal with. People had gone to jail for life for less than that! Then, whipped to a violent rage by the pain she felt, she started once more for her enemy. But the fish-women had gathered round her, petting and consoling her, and they held her back. *Tia* Picores, meanwhile, was spitting oaths and insults into the face of Rosario, who stood there pale, fainting, in fright and horror at what she had done.

Above the crowd outside the portico the top-knots of several policemen had appeared. The forces of law and order were trying to elbow their way into the throng. Sh . . . h . . . h! *Tia* Picores assumed command. "Back to your stalls, everybody! And mum's the word! Those pretty boys will be in here with their summonses and their papers! Nothing's the matter, remember, everybody, nothing happened at all!" Some one threw a

big handkerchief over the bleeding ear of the wounded girl. The women were all in their places looking straight ahead as solemnly as in church, and calling off their prices with laughable mechanicalness. As the officers passed from counter to counter the market was again in turmoil, but of a different kind. "What are those dudes doing in here? Some people never know where they belong. What's the idea? Just butting in, eh, lolly-pop!" And the police marched out as wise as they had entered, chased away by the drawling voice of *tia* Picores—who could never understand how people allowed such a government of thugs and grafters to exist among honest people—and marking time to the banging of metal scales, which all began to clatter as a parting salutation.

The market returned to its usual routine. The vendors were busy with their custom. Rosario, like a sphinx in dudgeon, stood upright and stiff behind her counter, indifferent to the passing trade, spots on her cheeks and temples turning black-and-blue from the buffets they had received. Dolores kept her back turned toward her enemy, but she was doing her best tc stifle the cries that her pain was almost tearing from her. *Tia* Picores seemed to be in a thoughtful mood, as she talked aloud and in monologue to the fish lying about in front of her. And those spit-fires would keep at it for the rest of their lives, eh! I kill you or you kill me!

Fine! And all over a man! Men! Men! As though there weren't enough hogs in the world to go round! But she would put a stop to it, she would. Any more of their nonsense and she would thrash them, thrash them both, by God! And perhaps they didn't think she could! Well, she would see!

Distractedly she seized the lunch that the charwoman brought at eleven o'clock—a roll of black bread with two dripping chops—and she swallowed it in a few hurried mouthfuls. Then, wiping her furrowed face with her dirty, greasy apron, she walked over to her niece's stall, planted herself with arms folded in front of it, and began her lecture.

That business had got to stop, if you please! The family of *tia* Picores could not be the talk of the Fishmarket all the time. It had got to stop! She had made up her mind, and when *tia* Picores made up her mind to a thing, she got what she wanted, even if God himself got in the way, even if she had to lick half of Spain to get it. *Tia* Picores had a bit of a temper herself when she got really mad. What had just happened would be nothing, nothing, compared to the fuss there'd be when she set out on the warpath. Those girls would have to make up!

"No, no!" Dolores groaned, clenching her fists and shaking her head decisively.

"No, no! No, no!" mimicked *tia* Picores. "What's the meaning of that? No, no! No, no!

Like it or lump it, but you make up, you make up! The idea, such a scandal in the family! And lucky you are in the family, both of you. That gives you a chance to make up. She tore your ear? Now, now, Dolores, think of those blows you gave her on the face. Tit for tat, with tit having a little the best of it. There's a good girl now! No, no—no use arguing . . . you just mind your auntie!"

And thence the fish-woman passed to the table of Rosario, where her language was stronger still. And Rosario called that being a lady? A mad dog, rather, a mad dog, yes—not to use the real word! "Don't you look at me like that, you jackanape, or I'll give you this pair of scales over your head, I will! That's what I get for being nice to you two brats. That's the way you treat an old friend of your mother! Well, now, Your Highness, this nonsense is going to stop, and stop here—just because I say so, I! Look at that poor Dolores over there, crying because her ear hurts so. Is that the way decent people fight, pulling each other's ears off? Only sneaks fight like that—sneaks, do you hear? When you fight, you fight straightforward and honest. Strike as hard as you want, but where it won't do any harm. Man alive! In my time I've pulled the hair of every wench in the market. You get their skirts up, and you take your shoe, and there, where it's all soft and tender, whack, whack, whack, till they have to sit on one side for a week. But

after that . . . a cup of chocolate in the café, and then . . . better friends than ever. Yes, sir, that's the way respectable people fight. And that's what you are going to do, if I have to lick you every inch of the way. You won't, eh! Well, we'll see! Dolores is stealing your man, eh! Ten thousand fleas on the good-for-nothing, anyhow! Excuse me, the girls don't chase the men. It's the men that chase the girls. Listen to me, dearie. If you want that man of yours to mind his business, you just keep things going at home right and proper. Keep him busy! Keep him busy! Then he won't go browsing around where he don't belong. *Diós!* such girls as are growing up nowadays. As much brains as so many geese. I'd like to see a man of mine with enough to him to have anything to spare for other women! Anyhow . . . this mess is all over. You're going to make up . . . because I say so, if not for a better reason. . . . Otherwise *tia* Picores will take a hand. . . ."

And with a mixture of threats and words of endearment the sturdy dean of the fish-women went muttering back to her place, to sell the rest of her stock.

Work was over early that day. There was quite a demand for fish in town, and the counters were emptying by noontime. The vendors began to sweep their leavings into kegs of cracked ice and to

cover them with damp cloths. The teamsters were collecting their baskets, large and small, and piling them up in the tails of their rickety *tartanas*. *Tia* Picores was putting on her checked shawl and chatting, in the middle of the portico, with a group of old women of her time who went shares with her in paying for a wagon. She still had that matter of the two girls on her mind; and as soon as everything was ready for the drive home she made for their stalls, and pushed and pinched till she had brought the rivals together.

Dolores and Rosario, unable to resist the browbeating of the terrible woman, stood with lowered heads, as though deeply humiliated at what was going on, but not daring to say a word. "We're going to stop a minute at the chocolate place," *tia* Picores directed to her teamster; and the company of mottled shawls and dirty skirts went out of the *Pescadería,* the flagstones echoing to the clatter of heavy shoes. In Indian file the women crossed the crowded market, where the last bargainings were in progress, *tia* Picores opening her way through the throngs with her vigorous elbows, behind her the bevy of wrinkly-faced, yellow-eyed veterans, then Rosario with her load of baskets,—for she always went to and fro on foot—and finally Dolores, her ear still smarting cruelly, but able, nevertheless, to raise a smile of pleasure when her pretty brown

face, no less winsome under the rude bandage around her head, attracted remarks of appreciation from the men around.

They invaded and occupied the chocolate shop, where they were regular customers. Rosario set her reeking, smelly baskets on one of the marble tables, and the odor of stale fish mingled through the room with the fragrance of cheap cocoa that drifted out from the adjoining kitchen. *Tia* Picores gave a grunt of satisfaction as she settled into a chair. Chocolate after the day's work was her greatest comfort in life. How well she knew that little café, with its striped matting on the floor, its white tiled walls, its frosted glass windows with red curtains; in front of the doors, ice-cream freezers in cork casings with metal covers; the counter, then, with its jars for cookies and sweets, and behind it the proprietor of the place sleepily brushing at the flies with a bundle of long paper streamers fastened to a stick.

And what would they have? Same as usual, of course; a half-pint cup all around, and a glass of lemon water apiece. This would make the fourth chocolate that *tia* Picores had downed that forenoon; but the stomachs of those tough daughters of the sea were poison proof, and they could sip gallons of that imitation "Venezuela" with the gusto of sybarites. Nothing to beat chocolate! Drink a lot of it if you wanted to last beyond your appor-

tioned three-score and ten! And eagerly the aged cronies sniffed at the bluish steam that was rising from the plain white cups before dipping pieces of bread into the muddy paste and raising them, dripping brown, to the toothless caverns of their mouths.

The two girls sat there, however, barely touching the good things in front of them, their chins on their breasts and avoiding each other's eyes. But when *tia* Picores's cup was almost empty her thundering voice came out to change the situation. "Did you ever see such a pair of sillies! Still mad, still mad! Well, well, the girls in the Market these days are not what they used to be! Once their faces are out of joint, there's no ironing them out again! Mad once, mad for always, eh! Couldn't be worse if they were tony folks up town! No, there's something wrong with the hearts of girls nowadays. And if you don't believe it just see here. Is there one of you at this table that at some time or other hasn't had her hair pulled or her face slapped by me? No! Not a one. What's more, I'll bet that if any one of you were to show the place you sit on, you'd find the scars of where I beat you with a hob-nailed shoe. No? Well, there you are! And we've never been better friends, and we're ready to stand by when any one of us gets into trouble. And that's the way for people to be. Quick-tempered? Very well. But ready to make up afterwards, like honest Christians. Leave your grumps at the door

and have a cup of chocolate, say I. And that's what my old ma said, in her day. And that's what the Fishmarket people always said. 'Don't swallow hard feelings! Throats are made for chocolate, white bread and *quinset,*' as the old song runs:

'Pesar, d'así no has de pasar.
Chocolat, bollet, y got de quinset!'"

And although the glasses they had before them were not of "quinset," since the season for ices had not yet come, all the old women, to show their approval of the philosophy expounded, drank their lemon-water instead with gulps and gapes of satisfaction. *Tia* Picores, meanwhile, was getting angry at the steadfast balkiness of the two rivals. "Well, now, speak up, numskulls! Haven't you tongues in your heads? You're going to stick to it, I suppose. You think I am talking just to hear myself talk. Well, you're wrong. See here, Rosario, what have you got to say? You're the most to blame. Come now."

The poor little woman sat there with her head still lowered, playing in her embarrassment with the ends of her shawl. She muttered something or other about her husband, and then said slowly: "If she promises . . . to keep him away!"

Dolores started like a shot.

"Keep him away! What do you take me for? A scarecrow, to keep people away from the house?

That fine husband of yours, I'll have you know, is my husband's brother. You expect me to shut the door in his face and spit fire at him when he comes around? But, after all, what do I care? . . . I don't want to be quarreling all the time, and be made the talk of half Spain. All those stories about me and Tonet are lies of people who don't know how else to make trouble in a good family. . . . Tonet went with me before Pascualo and I were married. Well, was it wrong to marry his brother? Bosh! Was I the first to do a thing like that? Well, why else should people talk? No . . . all I want is to be let alone, and not be plagued all the time. Keep Tonet away, no. I won't be mean to him. However, if I have seemed to be too intimate, I'll be more careful in the future, even though he's one of the family . . . just so people will have no reason to say anything . . . !"

Tia Picores beamed. "Now, that's the way to talk! Some heart in that girl after all, come now! Well, Rosario! Are you satisfied at last? There's a good girl! One smack, and bygones are bygones!"

Reluctantly, the women actually pushing the two heads toward each other, the girls kissed, but without rising from their chairs. *Tia* Picores, in the full flush of triumph, could not work her tongue fast enough. "The idea of two women fighting over a man, as if there were only one in the world! And

that's just what the rascals want you to do, sillies. Every time you quarrel over a man his stock goes up, and he thinks he's got so much more hold on you. No, indeed, women have got to stand their ground, good and hard, the way I did. My husband? Why, if he ever went on a rampage, I brought him to order mighty quick, I did; and the first thing he knew he was for asking my pardon. Was there ever a man in the world worth getting jealous over? Not much! Why worry then? Do you ever know where your man is when he is away from home? Of course, you don't. Just take it for granted he is up to mischief, and then forget about it. The less you fret about them, the better they like you. I led my man a song and dance, I can tell you. 'What are you doing in my bed! No, sir, where you spent the summer you can spend the winter!' And out he'd go, in a hurry. No 'dear this,' and 'dear that,' with my man! And he followed me around like a dog. That's the way to keep them tamed!"

Dolores, reserved and on her dignity, kept biting her lip as though she were trying to repress a laugh that was tickling at her palate. Rosario did not agree with *tia* Picores. No, she lived with her husband like a good wife, and she had a right to expect him to do as well by her. She didn't like quarreling and lying all the time. But the old woman did

not let her talk. "All nonsense! Nonsense! Good wife, good husband! Such rot makes me sick! You've got to take men as God made them, haven't you, girls?" And the "girls" assented with approving nods of their aged heads. "Count the men, and you'll get the number of dogs there are in the world! Kick them, and they eat out of your hand! But if you want to keep your husband faithful to you, it's very easy. Just tie him to the foot of your bed, with your petticoat, and never let him out of the house. . . . So much for men!"

The teamster several times had looked in at the door. "What do you old hens think this wagon is, your private coach?" "What's the matter with you, codfish? What are you paid for?" roared the gentle *tia* Picores. But on seeing that her comrades were drawing out their "purses," she extended her brown arm over the table majestically. "Put those bags back where they belong! This is all mine, all mine! I'm celebrating to-day. We've put some sense into these girls' heads!" And lifting her skirt and petticoat, she unhooked her own bag from a belt she wore next to her skin. From it came a pair of scissors she used in opening fish with heavy scales; then a knife that was rusty with grime; finally a handful of coppers which she threw down on the table. She sat for some moments counting the sticky money over and over again. Then leav-

ing a pile of coins on the bare marble, she went out of the shop to join her companions, who were already in the cart.

Rosario, carrying her empty baskets, was out on the sidewalk with Dolores. The two girls were looking at each other and did not know what to say.

"Come along with us, Rosario," *tia* Picores suggested. "We'll be a bit crowded, but we can get you home."

The girl refused, however. "Good-by, Rosario," said Dolores, smiling graciously. "You know, we are friends now." And she climbed in after her aunt. The wagon creaked under these two solid additions to its burden, but finally drove off with a music of squeaking joints and loose wheels. Rosario stood looking after it as if she were awakening from a dream. Could it all be true? Had she really made friends again with that hateful thing?

CHAPTER VI

THE SMUGGLERS

It was deep night; but the beacon on the Cabo de San Antonio, winking with a blinding glare like the eye of a Cyclops, broke the foam curling under the *Garbosa's* bow into spangles of colored radiance and sent a seething, restless, dancing pathway of fire out over the troubled waters. The adventurers were sailing close in shore before a faint land breeze. To starboard lowered the gigantic battlements of the Point, precipitous, weather-beaten, blackened by storm and sea. Inland against the starlit sky the somber Mongó reared its lofty head.

It had taken a whole day to cross the Gulf of Valencia; but now beyond the Cape the fair road to Algiers was opening, and the *Garbosa* would soon be out on the deep sea. Astern at the tiller, his eye studying the black outline of the promontory and checking up his bearings on the murky glass face of an old compass of *tio* Mariano's, sat the Rector, anxiously consulting Tonet, the experienced hand on board, the only member of the crew who had been "across the way."

"Easy as could be. The Cape, and then Southeast, Southeast, without swerving. Set her right, and she'll get there by herself, if this wind holds!"

The Rector gave a pull at the tiller with both hands. The *Garbosa,* groaning like an invalid turning over in bed, swung around to the course. The gentle swell that had been rolling her slightly from abeam she now caught full under the bow, and she began to pitch, setting the foam aboil. The light now came from dead astern, dousing its white sweep in the rippling wake of the vessel.

"And now for a bit of sleep!" Tonet stretched out on a coil of line at the foot of the mast and pulled a piece of canvas over him. His brother would steer till midnight, when it would be his turn till dawn.

The Rector was now the only one awake on board the *Garbosa.* The thrashing of the water forward was not loud enough to drown the snores from the crew sleeping almost at his feet. For the first time in his life, Pascualo was uneasy. He could draw a seine in a full gale. He had never thought once of danger in the worst of weather. But now, in his loneliness, he was filled with all manner of forebodings. How was this venture going to turn out? What a responsibility to be in charge of one's own enterprise! Would the old hulk hold together if a storm struck her? Supposing they were caught on the way back with a full load! And he sat on,

listening to the agonized moans that came from the *Garbosa's* joints, as she took the seas, or looking up at the throats of the giant bellying canvas which, as it swayed to and fro, seemed to be scraping the sky with the point of the mast.

But the night wore on uneventfully, and the dawn came, with a flock of red clouds, and as hot as a mid-summer's morning. The sail now kept flapping like the wing of a great bird in lazy flight. The wind was coming in barely perceptible gusts that tickled the surface of the burnished, prostrate sea, as blue as a Venetian mirror. The mainland was completely down. Away off to port some pink blotches, hardly distinguishable from the mist of sunrise, vaguely dimmed the horizon line. "That's Ibiza off there!" Tonet called to his companions. Slowly the *Garbosa* crept along over the tranquil, circular immensity, beyond whose rim black lines could occasionally be seen—the smoke of distant steamers. A bare ripple under the vessel's bows marked her virtual immobility. The sail hung lifeless from the mast, sweeping back over the deck at times as a capricious zephyr headed the course. Looking down over the sides, the eye plunged deep into the blue waters, where the sky, the clouds and the boat were mirrored in bottomless mystery. Schools of fish darted by underneath, shining like bits of tin. Dolphins were playing about on the surface close at hand, showing their absurd muzzles

and their black sides sprinkled with diamond dust. Flying fish, the butterflies of the sea, came up, flitted along for a distance, and then sank again into the depths. Strange beings of fantastic shapes and indescribable colors, some gayly striped like tigers, others in mournful black, some huge and chubby, others small and wiry, some with cavernous mouths and tiny bellies, others with enormous bodies and ridiculous little snouts, swarmed around the old boat, as though the *Garbosa* were one of those mythological craft that used to lead processionals of marine divinities.

Tonet and the two sailors were taking advantage of the calm to fish with hand lines. The "cat" was busy forward with the midday meal. The Rector was pacing the narrow deck astern, scanning the horizon and swearing for wind. The *Garbosa* was eating her way slowly along, but to all appearances she might have been nailed to the surface of that placid sea. Now, in the distance, a schooner was visible, caught in the calm, her sails sagging, eastbound, for Malta or Suez, probably. Great steamers occasionally slipped past along the horizon line, their funnels smoking, their decks almost level with the water from the loads of Russian wheat they were carrying from the Black Sea to the Straits.

And the sun rose high in the heavens. The waters shone with a dazzling glare as though boiling from an infinite conflagration. The decks of the

Garbosa grew hot, and her old timbers cracked stridently as they shrank. Captain and crew ate dinner under the shade of the sail, scooping with their spoons in the same spot, drinking deep draughts from the wine jug to cool their parched throats, their shirts open in front, sweating in streams, panting from the lifeless sultry calm, enviously watching the gulls that sailed by just above the water, as though afraid of the stifling muggy air on high. After their meal, the men walked about on deck for a time, lazily, and with heavy eyes, drunk with sunlight rather than with wine; then they went below, one after the other, throwing themselves flat on boards that were wet with bilge-water, and sagged under the slightest weight. So the afternoon, and another night went by.

At dawn the wind freshened, and the *Garbosa*, like an old war-horse touched with the spur, leapt forward, careering and dancing over the ruffled waters. About noon clouds of smoke began to rise along the horizon ahead, and gradually from the girdling sash of green sky, thick steel masts with battletops, the towers of forts, it seemed, came into view, and under them, floating castles painted white, spotted black with thousands of men, going this way and that through their own smoke, now forming in squares, now stringing out along the whole horizon—a flock of Leviathans, churning the water with invisible fins.

Algiers could not be far away! That was the French Mediterranean squadron, out for practice. God, what big boats people were making nowadays! The smallest of those monsters, the white cruiser, with all those flags and black balls, that kept going in and out among the other ships, signaling and directing the evolutions, would only have to graze the *Garbosa* to reduce her to kindling wood! And those black pipes sticking out of the turrets! One sneeze from those snouts, and it would be all day with the Rector's outfit and part of tomorrow! The smugglers studied the fleet with the uneasy respect a pickpocket has for a squad of policemen marching by.

About three o'clock, a dark irregularity, something like the arched back of a whale, rose on the horizon ahead! Land! And Tonet, who remembered having seen it before, called it the *Cabo de la Mala Dona,* the farthest outpost of the coast. Algiers was more to port! The breeze was freshening every moment. The swelling lateen sail, as the boat heeled, described a saucy curve on the tilted mast. The prow went merrily up and down, throwing a lively spray from the chop. The *Garbosa,* old horse, was smelling her oats, and bolting along the last lap to the stable, though every bone in her strained!

They were heading East-Southeast now; and by evening-fall, on the flanks of the *Mala Dona,* indis-

tinct still in the haze to starboard, could nevertheless be seen the rolling tops of hills, and white blotches that meant villages. Then, as the boat continued its rapid flight, these faded from view, but the coast itself was up, ahead. The *Garbosa* hugged the shore. With night, the saw-toothed crest of a ridge of mountains climbed up against the sky; and the wind veered to southward, blowing off the land, warm, and fragrant with the perfume of an enchanted country. Low in the west hung the new moon, a real Oriental crescent, fine drawn with curving points—just as you saw it embroidered on the standards of the Prophet, or shining from the weathervanes of Mahometan minarets! That was what you called being in Africa! The beat of the surf was audible from the *Garbosa's* decks, and even calls from Moors ashore there in the fields. Clusters of lights could be made out along the coast —towns off there! Then, the sky above the end of the mountain chain to the Eastward began to grow ruddy; the sea broke inland in a capricious curve; and soon many, many lights began to glow. Algiers!

In three hours they were in the roadstead. Now there were lights, of varied grouping and intensity, everywhere, hundreds of them, winding along in a serpentine course to mark a seashore boulevard. The *Garbosa,* luffing slightly, shot round a promontory, and the city itself, in all the splendor of a

Levantine port, was before them. *Cristo,* never mind *flor de mayo* and *alguilla!* It was worth the trip to see just that! And folks bragged about the harbor at the Grao! The humble fishermen stood there mouths agape; with the exception of Tonet, of course, who had seen many better things in his trip around the world! The water of the great bay was absolutely calm. A red and green beacon marked the entrance to the basin. The city climbed a hill in the background, the houses shining white even in the dark, from the millions of lights that suggested a festival. What a waste of gas! Long snaky stripes of color came out over the surface of the water, flecked here with the harbor lights of a merchant vessel, there with the distinguishing marks of a man-o'-war. Off in this direction was the European city—the brightest section, the restaurants and bazaars all lighted up, while the black ant-like forms of people, and the canvas-tops of swiftly moving vehicles, could be seen on the streets. And what a strange mixture of sounds! Music from the cafés, trumpet calls from the barracks, talking and shouting from the boulevards, cries from boatmen on the water—the blended murmurings of a cosmopolitan city of trade, cheating all day long for the money it wastes in pleasure after sundown.

The Rector could not indulge in the ecstasies of

wonderment too long. His mind went back to business. The men of the crew were gathering in the sail preparatory to lying to. Faithful to *tio* Mariano's instructions, Pascualo took a piece of tarred cable, set fire to it, and began to describe circles above his head, in series of threes, marked off by hiding the torch behind a piece of canvas which the "cat" held up in front of it. The signal was repeated many many times, the Rector meanwhile gazing steadily at the darkest part of the water-front. Tonet and the others stood around watching the operations curiously. Finally a red lantern gleamed on shore. The "market" had understood the message. They would soon be off with the cargo.

The Rector explained the fine points of all this signaling. It wasn't wise to take on a load inside the basin. *Tio* Mariano knew, from experience, that detectives were always on the watch there, ready to telegraph the name and description of any boat likely to be smuggling. These spies got a percentage on the profits of the confiscation. It was better to load up outside, and at night. By morning they would be off again, with absolutely no one the wiser. Then they could make Valencia without any trouble at all. For, who the devil would ever guess, at home, what they had on board? And the good-natured fisherman laughed

at his own shrewdness, though, inside, he rather admired the wily uncle who had given him all this good advice.

And the Rector waited, his eyes anxiously fixed on the water in the direction from which the red light had shone. Tonet and the two sailors were sitting on the bow, their legs dangling over the water. They were hungrily studying the brilliantly lighted town. Rosario's husband had been stationed at Algiers once, and he had all sorts of stories to tell about his gay escapades about the city. He could even point the places out from the lights in front of them. They could actually hear the music from one of the cafés, where he had had such a time, such a time! The "cat" opened his mouth from ear to ear, and his eyes gleamed excitedly. He could almost see the wonderful dancing girl the great man was describing. That long straight avenue there, leading from the pier—all arches, and a light under each one, so that it looked like the nave of a church with candles—was the *Boulevard de la République,* where the really swell places were. Only officers from the navy went there—absinthe, mostly—with rich Moors—you ought to see the big turbans they wore—and Jew merchants, with silk tunics, dirty usually, but of fine colors. The streets leading off it also had arches and pretty shops. Over there was the *Plaza del Caballo* where the principal mosque was—a big white building—

and a lot of those Moor lunatics went there, all washed and barefoot, to pay respects to that fake of a Mahomet. You could even see the little tower of the place from the boat. Well, at certain times of the day, a fellow in a turban got up there and waved his arms and shouted like a crazy man. And *madames,* all along, well dressed, and waddling in little steps like ducks, with a *mersi* for every compliment you dropped them! And soldiers, with date-palm hats, and trousers big enough for a whole family to get inside them; and lots of fine fellows from every country, who had gone there to get away from the police! A drinking place every two doors, with tables out on the sidewalks, and absinthe in big glassfuls!

Tonet had seen it all himself, and described everything with gestures or grimaces that vividly pictured each episode and kept his companions laughing noisily. And up there was the Moorish city. They remembered that alley just off the market at the Grao where you brushed the wall on each side with your elbows? Well, that was a mile wide compared to the holes those Moors crawled through, always uphill, the eaves coming almost together overhead, and a stream of slop running down over the steps in the pavement. You needed to have plenty of liquor aboard and your nostrils plugged before you walked in front of the shops up there, rotten filthy dens where those dark-skinned

devils squatted smoking in the doorways, muttering God knows what in that lingo of theirs. But you could live like a king with those people, yes, sir, and for very little, provided of course you didn't mind seeing people eat with their fingers after rubbing them in the dirt! You got a whole meal for a couple of cents, a pair of red painted eggs like you saw at home at Easter, and tea in cups the size of egg-shells,—and you could go to sleep if you wanted to, on the couch of some Moorish café there, to the sound of a flute and the banging of tambourines.

And then the women! Little Moor girls, their cheeks all painted up, their finger-nails stained blue, and queer tattooing on their breasts and backs; and then black ones who worked as *masseuses* in the baths; and the ladies, finally, with veils over their faces till all you could see was their nose and one eye, stumbling along in big fluffy trousers, wearing gold-cloth vests under their shawls, their arms like the show-window of a jewelry store, and all sorts of medals, coins, and half-moons, on their bosoms. "And what eyes! You never saw anything like it, boys! And the shapes they have. I remember once I ran into a big black one—rich, I guess—in a street in the upper part of town. Well, you know how I am—I simply couldn't help it! I just gave her a little pinch from behind. Well, sir, that woman squealed like a sick rat, and now from this direc-

tion and now from that a lot of big ugly devils came running with clubs the size of your arm. There was a fellow with me, and we took out our knives and held the gang off till the zouaves came. They put us in the coop for a couple of days, and then the consul got us out. You see," Tonet concluded, looking at his feet with an expression of weariness, "in those days I was rather wild!" But his companions were much impressed with the superiority of a man who had done all that. And they liked the story of the black girl best of all.

The Rector, who was still astern, gave a sudden cry. Some one from shore was coming aboard. And in fact a red light could be seen drawing nearer, and a curious chugging was audible, as if a dog were splashing his way toward the boat. It was the launch from the "market." A fine looking young man with a blond mustache and wearing a blue coat climbed up on deck. In the *lingua franca* of the African ports, a mixture of Italian, French, Greek and Catalan, he explained just what the situation was. He had received the letter of *mosiú* Mariano of Valencia, and had been expecting them the night before. He had understood their signal and brought the goods right off; for, even if the French usually winked at such things, it was just as well not to waste any time in getting through.

"All ready, boys," the Rector shouted to his men. "Load her on!"

The launch was piled high with bales, till barely a foot of smokestack was visible over the top. But one by one the heavy bundles began to come aboard, sewed up in waterproof burlap and exhaling a teasing fragrance. The two craft were lashed together so that the transfer was not difficult. As the packages vanished through the hatches of the *Garbosa,* the old boat got lower and lower in the water, groaning and creaking, meanwhile, like a long-suffering donkey complaining of its load.

The blond Algerian kept looking the vessel over, and his astonishment grew apace. Were they going to put to sea in a trap like that, loaded way down to the water line? The Rector replied with several knocks on his own strong breast to evidence an assurance that he really did not feel. Put it all on, put it all on! The way he figured, with the help of God and the Holy Christ of the Grao, every last bale would be on the shore at the Cabañal within forty-eight hours. The hold was soon full up. The remaining bundles were stowed on the old creaking deck, lashed down and propped with planks so as not to wash overboard. "Well, good luck, captain!" said the young man from the launch, and he shook the Rector's hand warmly.

The vessels were pushed apart, and the launch ran off. The *Garbosa* spread her sail again, and catching the wind, came around. The lights of Algiers began now to come from the left, and soon they were fad-

ing visibly in the distance. Once under way again, the Rector felt a gripe at his heart. Heaven help them, and not send a storm! Fine weather now! But still it was a miracle the old sieve got along at all. Amidships the deck was almost level with the water, and the boat seemed down by the head, and did not take the sea well. Though there was scarcely any chop, the waves came over, forward, as though a storm were running. Tonet, however, with nothing in particular to lose on the venture, made fun of the old tub—a torpedo-boat he called her, she sat so low in the water!

At dawn the *Mala Dona* was just visible, as an indistinct silhouette, over the stern, and an hour later they were fairly to sea. Out on the Mediterranean once more, the Rector could hardly believe the cargo he had taken aboard so rapidly during the night could be real. But there the bales were! You could see them! The men, quite played out from the hard work of loading, were sleeping on them. Besides the old *Garbosa* was crawling along like a mud-turtle from such a burden! But Pascualo liked the look of the weather. A smooth sea and a good breeze! If things held like that, the ramshackle old girl might last to Valencia—but no farther. It wasn't exactly fear. The Rector realized now the imprudence of starting an important venture in a rig like that. His poor old father had made fun of the sea, as he had; but that had

not prevented him from being tossed out on the beach one day like a chunk of rotting garbage! But all that day and the following night the breeze continued fair and the sea calm.

But the morning dawned with a sky that was overcast, and the wind came hard in streaks and squalls that were gradually piling up a sea. The Cabo de San Antonio had just come into view, with the mists curling round it. Behind, the peak of the Mongó alone was visible, for the base of the mountain was cloaked in cloud. The *Garbosa* was running with an alarming list to starboard, its bulging sail almost dipping into the water, as the vessel raced along. The frown of the weather was not at all to the liking of the captain, who, if he wanted to get his load ashore, would not be able to run in till nightfall anyhow.

Suddenly the Rector jumped to his feet and let the tiller go. *Futro!* There was no doubt about it. A sail had heaved in view out of the mists around the Cape. He knew that craft well. It was the cutter from Valencia on watch off the point. Some one had squealed at the Cabañal! The real object of the *Garbosa* had been not fishing, but something else! Tonet had also recognized the boat, and he looked at his brother anxiously.

There was still time! Out to sea with her! The *Garbosa* swung round a little, heading Northeast, away from the Cape. The maneuver was all in her

favor, as she now got the wind fairly over the stern quarter, and was eating into the sea like anything, taking every wave aboard over the bow. The cutter was surely after them, for she too came about and followed. A better and a lighter boat with more speed in her! But the Rector saw that the distance between them was considerable. He had a good start. He would run, run, run, damn it, clear to Marseilles if necessary—provided, that is, the old band-box didn't sink, cargo, crew, and all.

At noon the *Garbosa* had held her own. By that time they must surely have been as far up as Valencia. Suddenly the cutter changed her course, and turned shoreward, abandoning the chase. The sly devils! The Rector understood what they were up to. The weather had an ugly look. The cutter preferred to loaf along the coast, sure that sooner or later the *Garbosa* would try to get back home and land her booty.

"We'll go them one better," the Rector exclaimed, drawing a deep breath of relief. "We've got to find a place to crawl into, boys! We can't stay another night at sea in a mess of a boat like this. Off for the Columbretas! There's always a place there for an honest free-trader!"

At nine o'clock that night, taking her course from a lighthouse, and groaning and cracking as she bucked into a nasty sea, the *Garbosa* shot into the Big Columbreta, an extinct volcanic crater, caved

in, on one side, leaving a half-circle of steep, wave-eaten cliffs, within which the water is calm, unless the storm happens to be coming from the East. This island, uninhabited save by the keepers of the light-house, has not a trace of beach. The abrupt, precipitous walls of lava are too bare to feed a tree, so hot is the sun in summer, so heavy is the air with salt. At their base are piles of pebbles that the storm-surf has rolled on high, with a mixture of flotsam and jetsam and dead fish. Scattered around the larger islet lie the Little Columbretas,—the Foradada, piercing the surface of the water like the arch of a submarine temple, and a cluster of barren rocks, bald, sheer-faced, unapproachable, like the fingers of some prehistoric colossus buried there in the depths.

The *Garbosa* came to anchor in the pool. No one seemed to notice her presence. The lighthouse people were accustomed to these visits of mysterious craft, which, for that matter, came to this solitary archipelago just because they did not want to be noticed. The sailors could see the lights in the buildings on shore and hear voices even, but they paid no more attention to them than to the gulls that darted rapidly by overhead on the blasts of the gale, wailing like infants in agony. Outside, and on the windward shore of the island, the sea was snarling angrily. As the waves rolled by the promontory

they sent great smooth undulations back into the calm of the bay.

As soon as it was light, Pascualo went ashore, and up over a winding trail he found, he climbed the cliffs, to study the looks of things between the islet and the mainland, which still lay invisible in the storm. Not a sail in sight! But that did not reassure the Rector. The Columbretas were notorious as a refuge for smugglers in bad weather. He was sure his pursuers would follow him there. At the same time he was afraid to put to sea again in that leaky boat. Not afraid to die, but how about that load of tobacco, and the money he had put into it! Yes, but stay there, and have the government get it? Not much! To sea, then, even if the whole thing went to the bottom for the sharks to smoke! No coast guard was ever going to brag about getting rich on him!

After the meal at noon time, the *Garbosa* spread her sail, and left the sheltered anchorage as mysteriously as she had come. She said not even good-by to the lighthouse people who came out on the platform in front of the beacon to see her off. *Diós,* what a wind! First a slap here and then a slap there! The *Garbosa* almost stood on her stern end as she was lifted by the first wave, outside; but she staggered free and shoved her nose into the green of the trough that followed, as though she were headed

for the depths through one of those gigantic eddies that blinked like treacherous eyes of the abyss. Then, crash! The next comber came full aboard, the water churning into a white roar or atomized in spray, and sweeping aft in cascades over the bales of tobacco, while the crew, soaked to the skin, held on for dear life. Tonet grew pale, and clenched his teeth. He didn't mind bad weather in the right boat; but it was fool business leaving shelter in that God-forsaken punt. But the Rector, pot-bellied numskull that he was, would not listen to reason! The driveling idiot seemed to grow fat on getting people into trouble! And in fact, Pascualo's moon-face was glowing in the excitement of this battle with the sea. At every buffet of the waves he smiled, a purple flush suffusing his features, as though he were rising from a holiday meal. His arms seemed part and parcel of the heavy tiller, and his legs might just as well have been nailed to the deck. As the old *Garbosa* leapt and lunged, shrieking in every seam from stem to stern as though in panic-stricken agony, the Rector's spherical corpulence scarcely moved at all.

"What's the matter with you fellows?" And he would laugh with the loud bellow with which he applauded funny stories ashore—as soon as he saw the point in them. "Scared? *Diós,* why don't you wait till we get a breeze? Hardly enough air out this afternoon to catch your breath! Here she

comes, here she comes! Brrrrum! Never touched the old girl! If that fellow had gotten us, good-night and good-morning! Anyhow, in the other world every day is Sunday, the parson says! Die young, and the lobsters eat you; die old, and it's the worms! What's the difference! Me for a short life and a gay one! And if need be, we can swim for it. Hey there, here she comes! Brrrrum! Tra, la, la! Missed again! . . ."

And the Rector talked on, expounding the sailor's philosophy of life he had learned offshore under *tio* Borrasca. But no one listened, except the "cat," who was on his first voyage, and stood clinging, palish-green with fright, to the mast, but with eyes and ears, nevertheless, for everything.

Night fell. The *Garbosa* was hanging on under a close-reefed sail, driving head foremost into the pitchy dark. The lanterns had not been lighted, for the risk of being seen was worse, almost, than the danger of a collision. About nine o'clock, the Rector gave a frantic pull at the rudder. A light had appeared in the mist, close by off the port bow. It was a boat beating down in the opposite direction. Pascualo could not make out the lines of the craft as she sped past; but he knew it was the cutter, which had tired of loafing off the Cabañal, and was boldly running for the Columbretas to catch the smugglers in their refuge before the storm cleared. For the first time since leaving the pool that after-

noon, the Rector let go the tiller for a second. "This, for a pleasant night!" laughed he, making a coarse but expressive gesture of contempt towards his vanishing enemy.

At one o'clock another light came up ahead. Rosario! Rosario! That's the beacon on the Church! Square off the Cabañal! And just the time to make a landing! But would the folks at home be on hand?

The Rector headed inshore, but then his astonishing good humor gave way to a thoughtful mood. He knew what that coast was like. If he tried to lie to in that blow, it would be all over in two hours. They would smash up, either on the Breakwater or on the bars in front of Nazaret. To run offshore was out of the question. The *Garbosa* was getting loggier and loggier every moment. The water was already way up in the hold. She would break to pieces in the sea before morning. There was no other way out of it. Ashore she must go, and trust to luck! Driving as much before the breakers as before the gale, the vessel held straight on toward the beach still shrouded in gloom. Suddenly another light! And it flashed three times, and went out. Then, three times again! Tonet joined the Rector in a cry of joy. *Tio* Mariano was on watch ashore. It was the signal agreed upon. He had scratched three matches under cover of a shawl,

which kept the light from being seen except from the sea.

It looked like madness, but the Rector had the reef cut out of the sail. The *Garbosa* spurted like a race-horse, showing her keel, as she lunged through the waves, now forward and now astern. The boom of the surf ahead could now be heard above the howl of the gale. Finally, from the top of a comber, the beach came into view, the black profiles of the houses standing out against the sky. Then a sharp, snapping, crunching crash! The boat stopped short, grinding and groaning as though her timbers were being torn asunder. The wind caught the sail and the mast went overboard. A huge breaker burst over the stern, washing the men off their feet, and loosening the bales from their fastenings. The *Garbosa* had struck bottom, but only a few yards from dry land. Out through the surf a swarm of dark figures streamed, splashing into the water and rushing at the boat. Men climbed up on board, and without saying a word to the Rector and his crew, who stood there still speechless from the shock, they began to pick up the bundles and pass them on from hand to hand.

"Tio, tio!" the Rector called, finally recovering his wits, and leaping into the water, which hardly passed his belt.

"Here I am," came the answer from the dark.

"But shut up, for God's sake, and get to work!"

And it was a strange weird spectacle, indeed. Darkness, everywhere, and a sea bellowing in the gloom, the reeds and shore-grass bent low under the gale, the breakers tumbling in as though bent on swallowing up the land, while a legion of dark-skinned men, with their clothes off, tugged at great bales in the hold of the vessel that was rapidly going to pieces, or fished them out from the foaming waters and dragged them up on the beach, where they disappeared mysteriously, while, in the intervals between gusts of wind, the sound of creaking wagon wheels could be heard.

Tio Mariano was walking about from one point to another in his long-legged boots, calling off sharp, imperious orders, and flourishing a revolver in his hand. There was no danger from the revenue men. The guards had all been "greased," and were watching to give the alarm if their chief arrived. The gun was for those silent workmen handling the bales, a light-fingered crew, faithful disciples of the doctrine that to steal from a thief is a virtue. But none of them would sneak anything away in the confusion! By God, the first man who tried any tricks would get something!

By the time the Rector had recovered his composure after that nerve-racking day and that terrible landing through the surf, and after he had stopped nursing the bruises received from a fall as the vessel

struck, the last wagon was driving off; and the longshoremen had vanished silently in all directions, as though the beach had eaten them alive. Not a bundle had been lost. Even those caught in the hold of the *Garbosa* had been pried loose from the crushed timbers, now sunk deep in the sand. Tonet and the two sailors had salvaged the sail, and the few things of value left aboard, and were carrying their load off up the beach. The "cat," meanwhile, who had been washed overboard by the great wave that first swept the boat, had been revived.

"Oh, *tio!*" the Rector exclaimed, when at last he was alone with his uncle. "I can say that now, can't I! It was a tough job, but we pulled it off, didn't we? The Christ of the Grao stood by us fine! We'll figure up accounts by and by, eh? Now I'm going home to Dolores. And won't she be glad to see me!"

And the pair walked off toward the distant village with scarcely a glance at the poor vessel. The old *Garbosa* lay there grinding up and down, her nose in the sand, taking each breaker full over the stern, at each crash losing some shred of her entrails out into the night. And thus she died, like a worn-out horse, that labors on in the noblest of emprises without glory and without reward, and finally leaves its bones on the wayside to be picked white by buzzard and crow.

CHAPTER VII

THE NAMING OF THE BOAT

SOME days later, *tio* Mariano handed Pascualo the tidy sum of twelve thousand *reales,* the captain's share in the proceeds of the venture. But money was the least of the Rector's earnings. He had established himself now solidly in his uncle's grace, for the old man, with very slight risk to his own hide, had cleaned up twice that amount. Besides, the moment the whole story had gone the rounds, Pascualo became the lion of the Valencian water-front. A stroke of genius, that break from the Columbretas in a full gale! The cutter put in there at the height of the storm—and that was no child's play either—but she had her trouble for her pains!

The Rector stood quite aghast at his own good fortune. Adding the profits on the "moonshine" to the pile of money that, dollar by dollar, he and Dolores had stowed away in the place they only knew, you got a figure with which any honest man could start "something." And this "something" must of course have to do with the sea; for Pascualo was not the man to sit around in an easy chair,

like his uncle, and skin poor people on shore alive! Smuggling, meanwhile, as a regular thing, was out of the question. That's a thing a young fellow ought to do once, to get his hand in; just as he ought to gamble—for once—since fortune is likely to favor the beginner. But it doesn't pay to flout the devil, in the long run. For a man like the Rector, fishing was the only certain trade, but in his own boat, with nothing lost to outfitters, who sit quietly at home and skim the cream of every catch.

There were many sleepless nights for the sturdy sailor, who kept rolling over and over between the sheets and waking Dolores up to get her opinion on each new idea. At last he made up his mind. His capital must go into a boat, not an ordinary boat, you understand, but the very best, if that were possible, of all the craft that ever set sail from the beach in front of the ox-barn there. His day had come at last, *rediel!* No more deck-hand business for him, and no more of this going halves. He would own a vessel, and the pole he would plant in front of the house, to carry the nets when drying, would be the tallest in the neighborhood!

And that hull on the ways there, ladies and gentlemen, belongs to the Rector from the Cabañal! His wife, Dolores the beautiful, Dolores the charming, will still have a stall in the Fishmarket, for all her wealth; but she will be selling her own fish soon, her own, I'll have you know. And as the women

on their way to the *Pescadería* now walked along the Gas House drain past the boat yard, with envious eyes they noticed the Rector always hanging around there chewing the end of a cigar, and supervising the carpenters as they sawed and hammered and planed away at the long yellow pitchy brand-new timbers, some of them straight, and strong, and thick, others of them light and curving—the keel, the ribs, the sheathing, of the projected boat! Now, not too fast, boys, not too fast! The Rector is taking his time at this job as at everything else. Go slow and then you'll be sure. No mistakes allowed! There's no hurry! The main thing is to see that this boat is the very best along the shore!

While Pascualo was putting body and soul into his new enterprise, Tonet, with his share in the booty—the Rector had done his best to make it as large as could be—was enjoying one of his seasons of prosperity. In the tumble-down shack where he lived with Rosario to the tune of quarrels, swear-words and cudgelings, not the slightest trace of abundance entered after the lucky trip "across the way." The poor woman was as usual up at sunrise to carry her baskets of fish to Valencia or even to Torrente or Betera, at times—always on foot—to save the price of a wagon. And when the weather was not right for fishing, she spent her days in her hovel, in company with her poverty and her despair. But Tonet, her Tonet, was handsomer

than ever, in a new suit of clothes, with money in his pockets all the time, and a regular seat in the café, except when he was away, with some of the boys, at Valencia, going the rounds of the gambling joints, or spending gay nights in the Fishmarket section. Nevertheless, whenever he saw his uncle, and not to allow any of his claims on that worthy gentleman's pull to lapse, he would bring up the subject of the job on the harbor survey; for, chasing that position was his one serious occupation in times when he was out of money.

The fleeting prosperity that the African venture brought took him back to the joyous days of his marriage. With that happy virtue he had of taking no thought for the morrow, and with all that cynical gayety which endeared him so to women, he was not worried about what would happen when the windfall his brother had brought him should be exhausted. For that matter, his companions in roistering sometimes paid, and he had an occasional run of luck at cards. He would come home late at night to go to bed, scowling and cursing between his teeth. But woe to Rosario if she ventured any protest. For periods of two or three days, at times, he would not be seen there at all. Not so, however, in his brother's house. There he went frequently, loafing about the kitchen with Dolores, if the Rector was not at home, listening with bowed head and resigned humility, to the lectures she gave him on

his scandalous conduct. When Pascualo happened in on one of these dressing-downs, he always seconded loyally the sound preaching of his wife. Yes, sir, Dolores was cross like that, because she was really fond of him! As a respectable woman, she couldn't afford to have a brother-in-law tearing around all the time and being the talk of the town. And the fat good-natured sailor's eyes would fill with tears, *ira de diós,* at what his Dolores was saying, a real woman, by God, as kind as a mother to that fool of a boy!

As his funds got lower, Tonet's attendance on his brother's household was still more assiduous. He was turning the motherly advice he got there to good account. And to avoid any chance of gossip, he showed himself day after day with the Rector up at the boat-yard, watching the progress of the big frame which was now receiving its planking and was gradually taking shape under the persistent efforts of hammer, ax and saw.

And summer was coming on. The stretch of seashore between the Gas House drain and the harbor, so solitary and deserted at other seasons of the year, was busily returning to life. The heat was beginning to drive the whole city to the water's side, where a veritable town of movable houses, like the temporary encampment of an army, was growing up. In a measured line along the sands ran the shacks of the vacationers, cheap structures with

walls of painted canvas and roofs of cane, front doors labeled with fantastic names, and, to distinguish one camp from so many others like it, flag-staffs on the gables with banners of all colors, and above the flags, queer weather-vanes—boats, dragons, dolls, gew-gaws of every shape and form. In a second line, farther from the shore, and speculating on the appetite that salt air awakens in dyspeptics, came the more pretentious and the more permanent structures of the restaurants and eating-places, with stairways and verandas, façades of ornate but inexpensive stucco, masking the frailty of such pomp under ostentatious names: *The Paris Hotel and Restaurant, The Miramar, The Fonda del Buen Gusto;* and between these pedants of summer-time gastronomy, the lunch-rooms of the natives, huts with roofs of matting, rickety tables with wine jugs in the center, and outdoor kitchens, dispensing shell-fish with vinegar dressing from Saint John's day till mid-September, under signs of delightfully capricious spelling: *Salvaor and Neleta, wines, bears and likers.*

Along the roads through this mushroom city, that vanished like a fog with the first gales of autumn, street and steam cars dashed full speed, whistling to scare you before they crushed you flat; or *tartanas* creaked along, their red curtains flapping like banners of pure joy; or crowds of people pressed their way, with the murmur of many,

many voices. It was the humming of a bee-hive, varied with the calling of vendors, the thrumming of guitars, the nasal screaming of accordions, the clack-clack of castañets, the wailing of hand organs, all the kinds of noise that men with smoothed hair and soft white shirts can dance to, after internal baths with anything but water and preparatory to the return to town for a slashing or boxing fray with the first innocent policeman they come across.

The people of the sea, beyond the drain, watched the gathering of this annual invasion with interested eyes, but without taking part in all its jollity. Let them enjoy themselves—if they were willing to pay for it! All that merry-making was the source of the Cabañal's pin-money, for the other seasons of the year.

On the first of August the Rector's boat was, you might say, done. And what a beauty she was, come now, tell the truth and don't be envious! The proud owner spoke of his creation much as a grandaddy sizes up a new baby in his son's family. "The timber? Well, did you ever see solider beams than hers! And look at the finish on that mast! Not a cross grain to it from deck to point! A bit thick amidships! But I wanted her like that—handles rough water better. But just take a peep at that bow of hers! Sharp enough to cut paper with! Black along the scuppers, but with a shine like the patent leather shoe of a Grandee of Spain;

and the body of her, white, but smooth as an eel, and just as fast, by God, in the water!" The rigging, the fishing gear and other trappings, were not yet aboard. But the best tackle makers along shore were at work on them, and by the fifteenth, the whole trousseau would be ready, and, pretty as a bride on the way to church, would she take the water! All this and more, the Rector was saying one evening to the circle of neighbors who, as usual, were sitting around his door.

He had invited his mother and his sister Roseta to supper that night. Dolores was at his side. Some distance away, with his rope-seated chair tilted back against an olive tree, and looking up at the moon through the branches in the dreamy pose of a chromo troubadour, sat Tonet, picking at the strings of a mandolin. On the walk in front some fish were frying on a little earthen stove. A number of children, Pascualet among them, were chasing a dog about in the mud of the gutters. Groups were sitting in front of the other houses along the road, to get full benefit of the faint breeze that was blowing off the sea. *Redeu!* How people must have been stewing in Valencia that night!

Siñá Tona was getting very old. She had "taken her jump," as she put it. From comely buxomness she had passed abruptly into old age, and the raw bluish light of the moon made evident that the hair on her head had thinned, leaving a scant net-

work of taut gray locks over her sunburned scalp. The wrinkles now sank deep into her emaciated face while her cheeks hung loose and baggy, and her black eyes, once the talk of the whole shore, peered sad and faded from the folds of skin that drooped about them. Old long before her time, and from heartbreak, mostly, the spite and the worry that men had given her! And this she said with a nod in Tonet's direction, but with her thoughts, almost certainly, on the guardsman who had long before betrayed her. Besides, times had been getting harder and harder! What the tavern now brought in was nothing, practically. Roseta had had to go to work in the tobacco factory in town; and every morning, with her lunch-box on her arm, she went off along the highway to Valencia, joining the bands of pretty, bold-faced girls who marched with tapping heels and swishing skirts to sneeze all day in the snuff-laden air of the Old Customs House. And what a girl Roseta had grown to be! Roseta was just the name for her! When her mother, sometimes, looked at her out of the corners of her eyes, she seemed to see in her all the florid exuberance of the handsome *siñor Martines.*

Even now, while complaining that her daughter would have to take the long walk on winter mornings, she could not help feasting her eyes on that head of tangled golden hair out there under the

olive tree, those dreamy sea-green eyes, that white skin that neither sun nor wind could darken, flecked now by the shadows of the branches which the moon outlined in arabesques of light and shade on the girl's face. Roseta, with her air of a maiden who knows all there is to know, kept looking from Dolores to Tonet and from Tonet to Dolores. At the fulsome praises that Pascualo kept showering upon his brother—for drifting away from the waster's life he had been leading to spend more and more of his time in that house where he found a peaceful, homelike kindliness he had never known in his own—the young half-sister smiled sarcastically. Oh, these men, these men! Just as she and mama had always said! Either scamps like Tonet, or puddingheads, like the Rector. Men! She would have none of them! And the Cabañal could never make out why she refused every boy who proposed to her! She would never have one of the wretched animals kicking around between her feet. She had taken well to heart all the curses she had heard her mother heap on men in her bitterest moments of despair down there in the loneliness and gloom of the tavern-boat.

No one had spoken for some time. The fish continued sizzling in the frying-pan. Tonet was still picking disconnected chords from his mandolin. The band of youngsters playing in the street were

staring up at the moon as though they had never seen it before, singing in cadenced monotone with silvery little voices:

La lluna, la pruna
Vestida de dol . . .

"Eh, will you brats shut up!" Tonet protested, claiming that he had a headache. "You come and make us!" came the answering challenge:

Sa mare la crida;
Son pare no vol . . .

And the dog joined in this children's hymn of adoration to Diana's glory, with barks that filled the neighborhood with chills.

The Rector could think of nothing but the boat. Everything had been fixed for the fifteenth, even the matter of the curate, who would go and give her a dash of holy water in the middle of the afternoon. Everything, except one thing, *futro!* And that had occurred to him that very moment! Of course! She never had been named . . . ! Well, what shall we call her? This unexpected and exciting problem set the whole group a-talking. Even Tonet laid his mandolin down on the ground and seemed to be meditating deeply. He, at any rate, came out with the first suggestion: "Spit-Fire"! Now, what do you say to that!

The Rector's corpulent agreeableness saw nothing wrong with that name. Spit-Fire! What pride

it would be for him to command a boat that, faithful to such a christening, would go saucily crashing through the storms with the untamed arrogance of a Portuguese! It was the women who objected. Spit-Fire! Nonsense! Who ever heard of a fish-boat spitting fire! That would make her the joke of all the Cabañal. No, *siñá* Tona had the right idea—"Fleet-Foot," the name of old Pascualo's boat, the one he had died in, and that, later on, had been the home of all the family. But now it was the men's turn to shout something down. No, that would bring bad luck, as the fate of *Fleet-Foot* herself had shown. Dolores had a good one. Why not "Rose of the Sea" . . . a pretty name . . . as pretty as she was, and in fine taste. . . . But the Rector observed that that name was on a boat already. . . . Too bad, too. . . . It was a beauty! Roseta, who had pouted in disdain at every suggestion thus far, finally came out with her own proposal. She had thought of it at home, the evening before, on looking at a picture that came in a package of tobacco from Gibraltar. She thought the name looked so pretty! It was printed in colors around the trademark on the box—a girl in dancing costume, with roses red as tomatoes on the little white skirt and a bunch of flowers in her hand, as bright and stiff as radishes! *Flor de mayo!* The boat should be called "Mayflower!"

Recristo! The Rector rubbed his hands in glee.

Of course, just the thing, just the thing! Think a moment! *"Flor de mayo"*—the famous brand of Gibraltar! Well, the boat was built of tobacco, you might say. Most of the money in her had come from smuggling those very rolls that showed the gay dancer in the bright colors! Roseta was right! *Flor de mayo! Flor de mayo!*

The name pleased everybody, awakening in those sluggish imaginations a thrill of poetry and romance. They found something mysterious and attractive in the name, without suspecting the charm attached to it by that historic boat which carried the Puritans to the new world and marked the birth of the great republic of the West! . . . The Rector could not contain his joy. Roseta had the brains for you! Let's have dinner on that, ladies and gentlemen! And we'll have a real toast afterward . . . to *Flor de mayo!*

The frying-pan was lifted from the stove and carried into the house, and the whole family rose to follow—significant happenings that did not escape the watchful eyes of little Pascualet. He deserted his orphéon of tiny choristers. The monotone of *la lluna la pruna* came to an end, and peace settled over the moon-lit country-side.

It was not long before the whole Cabañal, with that gift for rapid perception of important things that little places have, was aware that the Rector's new boat was to be christened *Flor de mayo.* And

when, the evening before the blessing of the vessel, she was dragged down to the water's edge in front of the *casa del bòus,* the beautiful mysterious name could be read on the inside of her stern sheets, painted in letters of fetching blue.

The next afternoon, the cabin section of the Cabañal was in festive mood. Occasions like that were few indeed! Standing god-father in the baptismal rites was *"Señor* Mariano *el Callao,"* no less a stingy old fat-purse, granted, but with enough heart in him to shell out a penny or two for a nephew like that on a day like that. Sweets a-plenty were to be passed around on the shore, with barrels of drinks. Barrels! Besides, that Rector boy knew how to do things well. He took the crew he had engaged for the first trip and went off to the church to escort don Santiago, the curate, to the beach. The priest welcomed him with one of those smiles he kept for his very best parishioners only. "What! Ready so soon? Well, son, won't you just run around and tell the sacristan to get the water and the hyssop ready! I'll just get into my cassock, and be with you in a jiffy. . . ." "Not quite so fast, don Santiago!" observed the Rector. "Not quite so fast! You ought to see this is not an occasion for any cassock business, or stuff like that. Your cope, father, your cope, and the best you've got, see? You don't launch a boat like this every other day. Never mind about the money! I'll pay what's

right!" The good priest smiled. "Very well . . . the cope isn't just the thing, but cope it is, if you say so. . . . We're ready to accommodate good members of our flock, who know how to appreciate favors."

And they started back from the rectory, the sacristan in front with the hyssop and the holy vessel; then the curate surrounded by his guard of honor, the captain and his men. In one hand don Santiago was carrying his book of prayers, in the other the train of his old but sumptuous cope, to keep it out of the mud. The handsome robe was of a white somewhat yellowed with age; and the heavy gold borders had tarnished green, while the padding over the lining peeped through in places where the outer cloth had been worn thin.

Children came up in droves to press their sniffling noses on the good priest's hand, which at every step, almost, had to let the train fall into the muck. Women greeted smilingly from the sidewalks. The dear old *pare capellá!* What a good-natured soul—never too harsh on penances, but able to see through you, just the same, if you tried to fool him. Don Santiago had the secret of adapting himself to the weaknesses of his flock. Many a time he would stop in the street to extend his blessings over the fish baskets of some woman of the market, or touch his fingers miraculously to a pair of short scales

to charm it against any danger lest the inspectors of Valencia detect its fraudulent weights!

When the procession reached the shore, the bells began to ring, mingling their garrulous ding-dong in the gentle crunching of the surf. Late comers could be seen running along the sands to arrive in time for everything. There, on a stretch of beach that was quite free of boats, the *Mayflower* rose from the middle of a swarming crowd, her bright varnished sides gleaming white in the sunlight, her rakish mast, gracefully tilted forward, standing out against the blue, its peak adorned with the baptismal insignia of a new boat, sheaves of grass and bunches of cloth flowers, that would hang up there till the storm winds finally wrenched them loose.

The Rector and his party elbowed their way through the crowd pressing around the boat. At the stern were the two sponsors—*siñá* Tona, godmother, in a new shawl and skirt; and "Señor" Mariano, godfather, in his tall hat and with his cane, in the very get-up that he wore at his talks with the Governor in town! The whole family offered a spectacle of gay and showy magnificence. Dolores had her pink dress on, and a new kerchief of flaming colors; while her fingers gleamed with every ring she owned. Tonet was strutting about on deck in his new suit, his shining silk cap pulled down over one ear, twirling his mustache in im-

mense satisfaction that his conspicuous position enabled so many pretty girls to sate their eyes on him. On the ground, with Roseta, was his Rosario in the least shabby of her gowns, and sure not to make trouble with Dolores on such a solemn day. The Rector, for his part, had turned Englishman over night. He was sporting a blue woolsey suit that a friend of his, an engineer on a steamer, had brought on from Glasgow. On his vest shone a watch chain as big as one of the stays on his boat—and that was the real surprise he had saved for the celebration. He was sweating like a stoker in that garment that might have done very well in winter. He had taken upon himself the task of keeping order, shoving people back when they edged up too close to the priest and the baptismal party. "The idea, gentlemen. . . . That talking, there! Sh-h-h. This ceremony is not a thing to laugh about. The fun, later on . . . !" And he set a good example by taking off his cap and putting on a long face, as the chaplain, sweating just as much under that stifling cope, was fumbling through his book to find the prayer beginning *Propitiare Domini supplicationibus nostris et benedic navem istam. . . .* *Siñá* Tona and *tio* Mariano on either side of the curate stood with eyes nailed to the ground. The sacristan watched his master like a cat after a mouse, ready to say *amen* on the slightest pretext. The multitude with heads bare was hushed and still,

as though something extraordinary were about to happen.

Don Santiago knew his public. He read the simple prayer slowly and solemnly, making each syllable stand out, and introducing impressive pauses to take full advantage of the general silence. The Rector, quite beside himself with emotion and not knowing what he was doing, nodded assent to every word, as though taking those Latin phrases that were falling on his *Mayflower* seriously to heart. What he really caught was all that about *Arcam Noe ambulantem in diluvio;* and he straightened up to his full height in pride, at the vague feeling that his boat was being likened to that ancient craft, the most famous in Christian annals! So he was a real comrade now of that wicked old patriarch who invented wine and became the first and best sailor of his time, on earth! *Siñá* Tona could stand the strain no longer. She crammed her handkerchief into both eyes to keep the tears from bursting out. When the prayer was over, the curate reached for the hyssop: *Asperges . . .* and he sprinkled a rain of water upon the boat's stern, and the spray dripped down in shining drops over the painted sides. *Amen,* said the sacristan; and don Santiago, with the Rector in front of him to clear the way, and followed by the sacristan amening every word, started round the boat, showering Latin and holy water at every step.

Pascualo could not understand that the ceremonies were over. "See here, don Santiago! There's the rigging still to do, and the deck, and then down in the hold! There's a good fellow! It won't take you long . . . and I'll do what's right, you know!" And the curate, smiling at the earnestness of the young man's plea, went up, finally, to the ladder that had been set up against the *Mayflower's* bilge, and began the ascent, catching the floundering cope underneath his feet on every rung. And the vestment of white and gold caught the afternoon sun and gleamed afar like the shell of a bright climbing scarab. But when he had blessed everything to the Rector's full content, he withdrew with his assistant, and the throng rushed for the boat like an army storming a wall.

They would give her the right send-off, that crowd of bedraggled loud-talking ragamuffins, the scrapings from the whole beach, already besieging the sponsors with their petulant whining: "Our candy now, and the almonds, the almonds!" "Señor" Mariano's face was beaming omnipotent over the vessel's side. "Candy, eh! It's candy you want!" He well knew what all the good things he had brought to eat had cost—one whole *onza*—gold —to keep on good terms with nephew! And he bent over, and sunk his hands into the baskets between his legs. "Well, candy it is!" And he began to rain nuts and cinnamon lozenges, as hard as bul-

lets, upon the heads of the clamoring mob, and the young ones, girls and boys, began to scramble on the sand, fighting for the goodies, dirty underskirts squirming about among trousers with huge rents that showed the bare scaly skins of the beach-combers underneath.

Tonet was uncorking bottles of gin and pointing them out to special friends with lavish and condescending urgency as if he were doing the honors himself. Liquor began to pass around by the jugful. Everybody was drinking—the beach guards, their guns on their shoulders, retired sea-captains from the village, men from other boats—barefoot, mostly, these, and dressed in yellow baize, like clowns—and tiny "cats," with knives of grotesque proportions thrust crosswise into the sashes about their ragged waists.

The real carousal was going on up on deck. The planking of the *Mayflower* was beginning to clack like the polished floor of a ball-room, and the rich smell of a tavern was filling the atmosphere about the boat. Dolores, who could resist the call of all that gayety no longer, started to climb the ladder, kicking out at every rung at the crowd of pestering "cats" who gathered round for one look at the ankles of the pretty girl as she went higher. The Rector's wife knew that her real element was up there where there was so much man around, where her charms would be certain of voracious admira-

tion as she stamped about on boards that belonged to her—every inch of them—and where the women down below, especially Rosario—she would be green with envy—could get a good look at her success.

Pascualo, meanwhile, was with his mother. On that solemn occasion, which meant so much to him, which he had looked forward to for so long, he felt a strange return of his affection for the poor old woman. He forgot his beautiful wife and even Pascualet—the rogue was as busy as could be with the cinnamon balls, up on deck—to give all his attention to *siñá* Tona.

"A full-fledged master, outfitter, owner of a boat —my own boat!" And he kissed and hugged the old mother who was weeping streams from her puffy eyes. Tona's thoughts indeed were running back over long, long years of widowhood and loneliness and ostracism and over the memory of that mad adventure with the guardsman, to a similar christening she had witnessed in her youth. *Tio* Pascualo rose before her memory, strong, young, handsome, as she had known him in the days of their courtship. And his departure from life became as bitterly sorrowful as if he had vanished but the day before. "My boy, my boy—*fill meu, fill meu!*" she sobbed, throwing her arms about the sturdy neck of the Rector, who at that moment seemed to be the resurrection of his father's very self.

And Pascualo, in truth, was the honor of the family, the boy whose hard work had redeemed her lost station, her lost importance, in that community. Her tears now were not of sorrow only but of remorse. She had never loved the boy enough, not half so much as he deserved. Her affection was overflowing now—she must make up for all the past. Then, she was afraid, yes, sir, afraid, that her Pascualet, her poor little Rector, would go the way his father went; and as the words hung tremulously upon her lips, she looked off toward the tavern-boat, just visible from the *Mayflower's* splendid hull, in which that martyr of the sea had met his frightful end.

What a contrast between the *Mayflower,* so new, and strong, and spick, and span, and that rotting hulk which, for lack of custom now, was daily growing blacker and more worm-eaten! The old woman seemed to vision in the future a day when the *Mayflower* might drift ashore, cracked and water-logged, just as old *Fleet-Foot* had come home with her husband's corpse in her hold. No, she could not be happy. All that roistering and carousing was a sin. It was making fun of the sea, that hypocrite with the smiling face out there, that purring cat that was meek enough for the moment, but that would show her claws when once the *Mayflower* was in her power. Her boy! What a strong handsome boy—and she loved him as much

as though he had just come back from a long voyage! But old Pascualo had been just as strong and handsome. And he made fun of the sea too! Now, she knew it, she was sure of it! The sea had a grudge against her family, and would swallow the new boat as it had wrecked the old.

"Bosh, mama, bosh! *Recristo,* the old lady will never get her hands on me! But anyhow, why go crying on a glad day like this? You're just getting religion, like most of the old ladies—your conscience is at you for having forgotten papa for so long, perhaps. But you can make that right by lighting a good fat candle to the old sailor, in case his soul is still in Purgatory. Come now, mama, brace up. No more prophesying! The sea is a good fine lover of mine. I won't listen to any gossip about her! She gets riled at times, but after all she gives poor folks like us a living. Here, Tonet! Give us a drink, a good big swig! Cheer the place up a bit. Let's give the *Mayflower* a good old-fashioned send-off."

He took the beaker that was handed him and drank a deep draught. But his mother went on weeping, her eyes still gazing at the tavern-boat down the shore. The Rector showed some signs of irritation. "Still bawling, eh! And this is the time to talk of funerals! See, ma, you ought to have made me a bishop, then there'd be no cause for whining from the women folks. Honest, and

work hard, say I, and trust to luck! That's the sailor's creed! The sea? The sea gives us everything. It raises us when we are little. And it feeds us when we're grown up. We're always asking something of the sea! Well, we have to take a storm now and then, along with the big runs. Besides, somebody's got to risk his skin, if folks are going to have fish to eat. That somebody is me. Out to sea I go, as I've always gone. And that's the end of that! And now, enough of this whimpering business, what do you say, ma? Here's to *Flor de Mayo!* Here's to 'Mayflower.' *Cristo!* another mug, boys, on me, on me! Drink her down, drink her down, till every mother's son of you is drunk. And I'll feel insulted if they don't come down and get you to-night because you can't walk home, and find you all rooting in the sand here like so many grunting hogs!"

CHAPTER VIII

THE *MAYFLOWER* PUTS TO SEA

PASCUALO was on his way home from an afternoon in Valencia; but on reaching the Glorieta, he stopped in front of the Old Customs House.

It was six o'clock. The sun was tinting the enormous front of the building an orange gold, softening the colors of the greenish black smudge that the rain had left on the mansard windows. The statue of Charles II seemed to be melting into the mellow bluish transparency of the light-filled atmosphere. Through the gratings drifted the hum of a busy hive—voices calling, songs coming from a distance, the metallic click of scissors as the workers picked them up or let them fall.

Out through the big entrance the girls from the nearest floors were beginning to pour in animate throng—a horde of Indian shawls, a medley of strong arms with sleeves rolled above the elbow, an army of lunch-boxes slung over shoulders, a pitter-patter of feet, hopping in short quick steps like sparrows, a hub-bub of good-nights, of greetings, of parting gibes. The promenade for the guards,

where a few drinking fountains were the only obstructions, was one seething mass of feminine youth.

The Rector, attracted by that curious riot of tobacco-girls, had paused on the sidewalk across the street, among the newspaper stands. A strange fascination it had for him, that moving mass of white handkerchiefs drawn tightly over pretty foreheads! What a bedlam! A regiment of females in mutiny! A nunnery gone mad! A meteor-shower of black eyes, that stared at a man boldly, immodestly, stripping the clothes off one, it seemed, with mocking effrontery!

And who was this coming in his direction? Roseta had spied him, and deserting a party of girls, was tripping over toward him. Her companions were to wait for friends from another floor, and they might be some minutes in starting. Was he going home? All right! They would go together! Roseta hated just standing around!

They took the Grao road, Pascualo moving his sea-legs frantically to keep up with that devil of a girl who never walked but she ran, though with an attractive swaying of her body which made her skirt go up and down like the marking buoy in a yacht race. Shouldn't he carry her lunch-box for her? Thanks! She was used to having it on her arm. Didn't think she could walk so fast without it!

By the time they were at the Sea Bridge, the cap-

tain was on the subject of his boat, as usual. That *Mayflower* of his could even make him forget he had a Dolores and a Pascualet! The next morning the *bòu*-fishing began, and all the vessels would go out. "But she's queen of the lot! We hitched the oxen on to her yesterday, and now she's in the water, anchored with the other boats in the harbor. But there's no mistaking her, girl! She strikes your eye like a *señorita* in the middle of a bunch of beach-trailers!" He had been in town to get a few odds and ends still lacking to his equipment. Now he had a dollar to bet that not one of the rich men in the Cabañal, who sat around at home and got the best of every load of fish without lifting a finger, could show a craft half the witch the *Mayflower* was . . . not half.

But the end which comes to everything in this world came also to the store of nice things the Rector had to say, in his enthusiasm, about his boat. By the time the pair had reached the bakery of Figuetes, Pascualo had lapsed into his normal taciturnity, and Roseta held the floor, dealing with the forewomen in the tobacco factory in terms that such cattle deserved.

"Work the life out of you, they do! It was all I could do to keep myself from waiting outside and pulling the topknot of that wench as she came out! I don't mind about myself so much. Mama and me can get along on nothing almost. But it's different

with others of us. Why, some of those girls have to sweat like niggers, to feed some loafer of a husband, and a houseful of brats that wait at the door at night with their mouths wide open to swallow half the bread in town! What I don't see is how, in conditions like that, there's a woman left in the world who can laugh. For instance . . ." And the golden-haired Diana, so insensible to the allurements of men, but reared withal among the filthy-mouthed ragamuffins of the seashore, struck an air of stern and serious modesty, and recounted in words of disconcerting directness, but with a rippling sweetness of tone that seemed to wipe the foulness of such language from her cheery lips, the story of a shopmate of hers at home with a broken arm, after a beating from her husband, who had caught her in flagrant wrong-doing with a friend of his! "I wouldn't call her much of a woman, I wouldn't!" and the virtuous Roseta pouted the pout of a virgin who knows all there is to know. "What a disgrace! And she had four children—four!"

The Rector smiled a ferocious smile. "So she got out of it with a broken arm, did she! I'd have broken her neck, I would! No half-way business with these women that don't know what belongs to their husband and what belongs to the other fellow! Imagine living with a thing like that! Thank God, I didn't draw one of that kind. I've got a good

wife and a happy home!" "Yes, you can thank God, all right," Roseta assented with one of her smiles of compassionate contempt. But the Rector was not spry of wit. And the finer shadings of irony escaped him.

But as the simple-minded sailor walked along, he grew more and more excited at the outrageous conduct of that woman he didn't know and at the misfortune of that husband whose name he had never heard. "You know, a rotten business like that gets under my skin, it does. Here's an honest man breaking his back from morning till night to feed his woman and his boys and his girls, and comes home from the shop and finds my lady flouncing around with Mr. 'Friend'! God, girl! I'd cut the wench's throat, I would—if I swung for it! If you ask me, I say—well, whose fault is it? The women! Yes, the women! What was a woman ever put on this earth for, except to damn a man's soul! *Diós!* I never saw but two decent women, anyhow. One is Dolores, and the other is you!" For the Rector, when he talked so extensively, was inclined to go to extremes, and he felt this time that his sweeping denunciation needed that much qualification.

Though much good the concession did him! For his sister was now on ground where, from the long tirades of *Siñá* Tona, she could be counted quite expert. She talked passionately, with a tinge of irri-

tation in her sweet vibrant voice. "Women, eh! Women! Not a bit of it! It's the men, I say, and I know what I'm talking about. Among the pigs in this world, the prize hog is the man! See trouble anywhere? Look and you'll find a man at the bottom of it. Mama says so, too. There are two kinds of men in this world—scamps and puddingheads! If a woman goes wrong, it's the man that's to blame. If she's not married they are all after her to get what they want . . . and maybe I don't know that! If I was the fool some men take me for, God knows the fix I'd be in to-day! And if you are married, well, it's worse, almost—for the scamps try to get you into trouble, and the puddingheads haven't sense enough to keep their wives where they belong. Look at Tonet, for instance! Wouldn't Rosario be serving him right if she went on the street, even, to get square with him for all he does! And then, well, no! Stop at Tonet! We don't need to give other examples! But the whole Cabañal knows about husbands that are themselves to blame if their wives aren't all they ought to be!"

And the girl leered at the Rector so unguardedly, in saying this, that Pascualo, in spite of his corpulent obtuseness, caught the glimmer of an allusion and studied her face enquiringly. But his immense faith, at bottom, in people and in things stood him in good stead against any dangerous inference. And he protested, mildly, at her exaggeration.

Bosh! People in the Cabañal made him sick! They were always talking about somebody, to pass the time. If you listened to what people said, there wasn't a decent woman in town, nor a husband that wasn't the joke of the beach. But that's only a way they had of amusing themselves. The Cabañal had no manners, as don Santiago, the curate, said so well! "Now, take me, for instance. I've got the best, sweetest wife in the world, and everybody knows it! Well, does that keep those fools from blabbing about her? And who's the man? Tonet, may it please the court! Tonet, of all men! The people in the Cabañal are donkeys, idiots, rotters, that's all! Tonet, God save us! Why, Tonet . . . he worships Dolores, like a mother. . . . But no, my house has simply got to be a brothel, for those chatter-boxes. . . . Tonet! God!" And the Rector laughed one of those hearty laughs of pitying superiority at the stupidity of people, the kind of laugh the Spanish peasant gives when he hears some benighted ignoramus questioning the authenticity of the village Virgin's miracles.

Roseta stopped short in her tracks, sizing up the Rector with those dreamy sea-green eyes of hers. What did that laugh mean? Was Pascualo serious? Yes, without a doubt. As serious as a preacher! That puddinghead was proof-proof! And the certainty angered her. Instinctively, without reckoning the consequences of what she was

doing, she came out with the charges that had been tickling her tongue for years! In short: two kinds of men, scamps and puddingheads! And a glance of hers stamped the second label upon her brother, as he, in fact, divined.

"So I'm the puddinghead, am I! Hah-hah! . . . Now see here, Roseta . . . out with it! All you know! And no mincing of words, either, or you'll be sorry!"

They were half-way home now, near the road-side Cross. And they stopped a moment in front of it. The Rector's ruddy face had turned pale as death, and he kept biting nervously at his fingers, those blunt, bony, calloused fingers of a fisherman.

"Well, Roseta," he added, when she stood silent still. "Out with it!"

But the girl did not come out with it. She had caught a dangerous gleam in her brother's eye. She was afraid she had gone too far; and, a kindly soul at heart, she repented her imprudent innuendos. She had caused the pallor and the expression of fierce solemnity on that good-natured face!

"Oh, as for knowing, Pascualo, I don't know anything. It's only what people say. But they say lots of things. And if you want them to stop talking, I'd advise you to have Tonet around your house as little, as little, as possible!"

Pascualo had stooped over the watering-trough near the Cross, and covered the whole end of the

pipe with his mouth, to let the stream run full into his stomach, as though to drown a conflagration that was burning in his insides. He straightened up and started on, the water dripping down over his chin, till he wiped it away with the back of a rough hand.

"I see. So that's all talk! Well, if they want to wait for me to be nasty to Tonet, they can wait till hell freezes over. Filthy, stupid, malicious chatter-boxes! That's what they are! So I must slam the door in the face of that poor boy, eh! Well, I won't! Just when he's settling down a bit, from the good influence Dolores has over him! And they're all jealous of her, that's what. Just plain jealous!" And the gesture with which he underlined the spiteful words seemed to include Roseta among the envious. "Well, it's my affair, and so long as I don't worry, they needn't. Let them talk their tongues off. That boy is what amounts to a son to me. Why, it seems only yesterday when I was carrying him around in my arms, like a nurse. And when he went to bed at night, I'd roll up in a ball almost, so's he could have plenty of room. And now I'm to kick him out of my house. No, you don't forget some things in a hurry. Oh, yes, when things go right and there's no trouble, you forget easy enough. You forget the fellows you used to drink with in the taverns. But we used to be hungry together, *redeu,* hungry; and you don't

forget times like that. Poor Tonet! No! I'm going to stand by that boy till I get him on his feet and make a man of him, I am. What do they think! . . . That I'm an ox, probably, a plain damn fool! All right, but this damn fool has got a heart under his ribs, he has." And the Rector, filling with deeper and deeper emotion, rapped on that well-padded chest of his, and his thorax echoed like a drum.

For as much as a quarter of an hour the two of them walked on in silence, Roseta frightened at the possible outcome of their conversation; Pascualo, in a gloomy mood, stumbling along with lowered head and frowning darkly whenever he raised his eyes, clenching his fists as though in struggle with an evil thought that would not down. Thus they reached the Grao and were through it before either of them spoke.

"And anyhow, Roseta," said the Rector at last, from sheer necessity of giving some expression to the anguished meditations that were writhing within him, "and anyhow, it's just as well that it is mere talk. For if I should find some day, that it's more than that . . . *recristo,* nobody really knows who I am! I'm afraid of myself, sometimes! I'm an easy-going sort of chap, and never go around looking for trouble. I even yield a point down on the beach, now and then, because I've a boy to look out for and have never cared to play the bully, or the

tough. But there are two things in this world that I have, and that I call mine: my money, and my wife. Let no one dare lay a finger on either of them. On the way back from Algiers, with that load, I was afraid once the cutter was going to get us. And do you know what I had made up my mind to do? Back up against the mast there, with my knife out, and kill and kill and kill, till they cut me down on top of those bales of 'mayflower' that for me meant fortune. And then Dolores . . . at times when I thought how nice she looked and what a good woman she was, something of the great lady about her—I don't know what—that makes her so wonderful, it occurred to me—why not say it right out?—that some fellow, some day, might try to get her away from me. Well, sir, I could have throttled her almost, at the mere idea of such a thing, and then gone out raving through the streets like a mad dog. I guess that's what I'm like, Roseta, a dog; so good-natured, so harmless, ordinarily, but able to clean the town up when he goes mad, so's they have to kill him. Well, that's the point! They'd better let me alone, and not go monkeying with my happiness, nor with what I've got together with my own hard work. . . ."

There was a drawn expression on his face as he looked at Roseta after this tirade, a veritable oration for the phlegmatic Rector; and the poor girl felt

as if she were being accused of the attempted theft of Dolores.

But Pascualo suddenly, with a gesture of disdain, seemed to come out of his abstraction; and it was evident he felt ashamed at having lost hold on his tongue so far, in a moment of baseless alarm. He had had enough of Roseta, however. And, in fact, they could separate there. "Remember me to mother!" he said, as he turned down to the beach, leaving his sister to go on alone along the road toward the tavern-boat. But it was late that night before the influence of that disquieting conversation was lifted from Pascualo's mind. Tonet was at home when he arrived, but did not seem at all embarrassed in his presence. All a lie, of course! One look at the boy was enough to show that! The Rector looked searchingly into his own heart, and could find no trace of suspicion there. Nothing to it, absolutely, absolutely, nothing! And when the men of the crew dropped in to get their final orders for the next day, he had forgotten the matter completely.

He had hired a boat to work in team with the *Mayflower,* though, with dog's luck, he would some day be able to build another just like her! Among the men was an old sailor whom the Rector listened to with profoundest respect. *Tio* Batiste was the oldest tar in the whole Cabañal. Seventy

years of sailoring were stuffed into that sun-dried crackling hide of his, whence they issued, smelling to heaven of strong tobacco, in the form of practical suggestions and maritime prophecy. Pascualo had taken him on, not so much for the help his aged arms could give, as for the exact knowledge he had of the coast thereabouts. From the Cabo de San Antonio to the Cabo de Canet, the gulf did not have a hole nor a shallow that *tio* Batiste did not know all about. Turn him into a smelt and toss him overboard, and he'd tell you where he was, the minute he got to the bottom! The top of the water might be a closed book to other people; but he could read, from the looks of it, just what there was underneath.

He would sit up forward on the boat, and describe the bumps on the bottom as though he were on a wagon roughing the road-ruts. With one glance he could tell whether your boat was over the kelp grounds, or over the mud-banks, called *El Fanch,* or over those mysterious submarine hillocks, called the *Pedrusquets,* where the fishermen were always in terror of losing their nets on the sharp crags that cut the seines to shreds. Between the *Muralls de Confit,* the *Bareta de Casaret* and the *Roca de Espioca,* lay deep tortuous gullies far down under the sea. *Tio* Batiste could drag a net through the winding channel there without catching on a single rock, and without scooping up a mass of kelp

that would break your tackle through. A dark night of fog! Not a lighthouse visible! Thick gloom ten feet ahead! One taste of the mud on your net, and the old wizard would say where you were to a hundred yards. Only a salmon or a squid could have been the teachers of that wondrous learning! And *tio* Batiste knew many other useful things—that you should not cast your seine on Hallowe'en, for instance, unless you wanted to bring up a corpse; or that the man who carried the Cross of the Grao on Good Friday would never die at sea.

For that matter he had spent all his life on shipboard. By the time he was ten, he could show callouses under his arm-pits, from hauling at the lines. He had a dozen trips to Cuba to his credit—not the kind of trips youngsters brag about nowadays, because they've been across as waiters or barbers on a big liner—but real voyages, in good old-fashioned *faluchas,* better built than they make them now, that went out with wine and came back with sugar, and were owned by gentlemen in cape-coats and top-hats! And every trip with a lamp on board, lighted at the wick floating in the oil bowl before the Christ of the Grao! And a rosary every night on board, without fail, unless you wanted something awful to happen! Those were the days, according to *tio* Batiste, the real days, for sailormen. And as he cursed on, the wrinkles would wiggle all over his face, and his ancient goatee

would whip up and down; while vicious bits of forecastle obscenity would punctuate his contempt for the irreligion and the conceit of the younger generation of salts.

Pascualo liked to hear the old man talk. There was something of his old master, *tio* Borrasca, about him, and the man reminded him of his father, old Pascualo, too. Though the other members of the crew, Tonet, two sailors and the "cat," made fun of the venerable tar, and tried to get him angry all the time by assuring him he was too old for the business now, and that the curate would be willing to take him on as sacristan. *Chentòla!* Too old for real work, eh! Wait till they got out to sea, and they'd whistle another tune! The boys of these days don't know what a wind is! He'd be fanning himself, while they'd be calling for mama!

The next morning all the Cabin section was in motion. The *bòu*-boats would put to sea that evening after sundown—taking the men-folks offshore for their honest battle with the elements for bread. An annual migration of husbands, brothers and sons, this; but, nevertheless, the women, thinking of the months of worry and uneasiness they would have ahead of them till spring, could never take the event very calmly.

Captains were bustling about with their last preparations. They went down to the harbor to look over their boats, test the pulleys, run the lines, raise

and lower the sails, pound the bottom over inside, be sure the supplies of rope and canvas were on hand, count baskets, examine nets. And when inventories were complete they would have still to go back to the office to get clearance papers from all those stuck-up fellows in white collars who could hardly speak to a workingman decently!

When the Rector went home for dinner at noontime, he found *siñá* Tona in the kitchen talking to Dolores, weeping her eyes out, and patting a bundle she held across her knees. When she saw her son coming, she began at him angrily. "I've just heard, and it's a pretty father you are! So Pascualet is going 'cat' on the *Mayflower!* A boy of eight, who might better be at home with his mother, or at least playing down at the tavern with me! The idea! A baby like that going to sea and made to do a man's work, and Lord knows what else! Well, I'm not going to stand it, I'm not! That's not the way to treat a child! And since his mother don't dare open her head, and his father is actually the one to blame, his grandma must take a hand! I've come to get Pascualet and take him home with me. I won't allow such a thing. Pascualet! Pascualet! Your grandmother wants to see you."

Pascualet came in, the little devil, swallowed up in a suit of yellow baize, bare-foot, to be more in character, and with a sash that passed almost under his arm-pits and made his blouse bulge out like a

balloon. Cocking his black cap down over one ear, he began to strut up and down in front of the women, imitating the tough and independent manner of *tio* Batiste, and trying to put some of that worthy's picturesque obscenity into the insults he heaped upon his grandmother for her efforts in his behalf. "I'm through playing at the tavern! You can keep your bread and cheese! I'm a man now, I am; and I'm going 'cat' in the *Mayflower!*"

His father and mother were in convulsions at the saucy antics of this chip of the old block. As for the Rector, he could have eaten the boy alive with kisses. But *siñá* Tona could only bawl and bawl like a cry-baby, till her son got really angry. Mama, will you stop that noise! What do you think we are doing to the boy, cutting his throat? The world isn't coming to an end! Pascualet is just going to sea, the way his father, his grandfather and his great-grandfather did. What do you want to make of him? A tramp? No, I want him to be a man of pluck, and able to do a day's work, and not be afraid of salt water, where his living is likely to be. If I can leave him a little bit, when I pass on, so much the better; but he ought to be ready to look out for himself. He'll be in no danger. But if he gets to know what a boat is, he'll go to it with his eyes open. Any one can have an accident, afloat or ashore. Just because my father ended the way he did is no signs we're all to end that way. Too

much bawling around here! Give us a rest, will you!"

But *siñá* Tona knew they were all possessed of the devil! The sea had her eye on the whole family, and would get them all, finally! She hadn't slept a wink for nights—and the most frightful dreams! Worry and worry about your son! And then you find they're taking the baby, too. No, she couldn't stand it any more. They were bound to kill her with worry and sorrow! If they weren't her children, she wouldn't look them in the face, they were so brutal!

But the Rector, letting the old lady grumble on, sat down to his bowl of steaming soup. "What do you say to dinner, Pascualet! Don't mind her! Your daddy is going to make the best sailor in the Cabañal out of you! Tell us, mama, what you got in that bundle?"

Siñá Tona boo-hooed louder than ever at the joking question. A present! A little present, that was all! She thought it would ease her mind. So she had taken what money she had saved —a few pennies it was—and had bought something for him. A life-preserver! A neighbor of hers had gotten it from an engineer on an English steamer! And she produced the huge vest of padded cork, which folded up so easily along the seams! The Rector looked at the strange mechanism and smiled. Did you ever! What

things people could think of! "I'd heard there were rigs like that in the world, but I never saw one before. Glad to have it aboard, though I can swim like a fish, myself, and never do it in uniform!" And he was tickled to death, at bottom. He left his soup and tried the life-belt on, laughing at his own stoggy appearance in it; for it made his already generous allowance of paunch still more conspicuous, and he ended by looking and puffing like a seal—for the straps made it hard for him to breathe. "Thanks, thanks! I'll not drown in this. I'll simply strangle. But the *Mayflower* will like to have it!" And he dropped it to the floor. When Pascualet, tugging and straining, finally got the thing on, his head and feet barely extended beyond the cork armor. He was a tortoise in a shell, for all the world!

The meal was almost over, when Tonet came in, with a huge bandage around his hand. He had just had a bad blow, that morning; and he reported the news in such a way, that his brother did not see fit to ask how nor why; nor was the Rector sharp enough to note the self-conscious expression on the face of Dolores. Up to his usual tricks, that boy! Probably been in another fight in some drinking-place! "But what do you expect you'll be good for outside? All trussed up like that! Never mind this trip. We won't be out more than a day or two, if we have any kind of luck. We'll

take you day after to-morrow, or next day!" The Rector talked on very calmly. That temper of his was hard to ruffle! But Tonet and Dolores sat looking at the floor, as though they were ashamed of something.

At four o'clock, the final preparations for the sailing of the fleet began. The *bòu*-boats, two by two, were moored to the harbor wharfs, dipping their masts on the swell as though curtseying to the people ashore, while their hulls went up and down in graceful undulation. Those tiny sea-dogs, with their rough profiles of ancient galleys, made one think of the old armadas of Aragon, or of the fleets of doughty pinnaces with which Roger de Lauria used to spread terror along the coasts of Sicily. And the fishermen, too, as they came down, crew by crew, their clothes and blankets in rolls over their backs, looked like the bands of *almogávars* that gathered, of old, on the beach of Salou, to sail, in like craft or worse ones, to the conquest of Majorca. A savor of the historic, of the antique, hovered about that fleet and about each separate craft, which took you back, perforce, to sea legends of the Middle Ages, when the triangular sails of Aragon were as dreaded of the Moors of Andalusia as of the isles that lay smiling in the classic seas of Greece.

The whole village was down on the shore. Women and children were running here and there, try-

ing to identify, in the forests of masts, of crossing and criss-crossing cordage, the boats where their own men were. It was the annual excursion into the deserts of the sea, the recurring foray out into danger to snatch bread from the mysteries of the deep, which sometimes gives up its treasures peacefully and without a struggle, but at others hangs on to them and threatens the plucky Argonaut with death.

Down over the gang-planks from wharf to deck, moved a procession of bare feet, yellow trousers, sun-baked faces, all that miserable flock of human beings who are born, live and die, on that shore there, knowing nothing of the world that lies beyond that blue horizon. Hunger, on the starting-line, as it were, for a race with death at the signal of opulence! Men condemned to ignorance and filth and danger, that, inland, other men may sit down before glossy linen table-cloths, and feel their mouths water before a succulent lobster's claw or a creamy cod swimming in luscious sauce!

The sun was hanging low. The last flies of summer, their huge bellies swollen and their wings sluggish, were buzzing about in the golden afternoon, gleaming with a sputtering fire. Away to the horizon, which the peak of the Mongó broke with a blotch of haze, like an island floating in the distance, the sea stretched calm and tranquil. Good weather! Good weather! That was the burden

or every woman's tongue, as the boats swallowed up crew after crew. With good luck, there would soon be good things a-plenty in every house! Now the "cats" were almost the only sailors left on shore. They were still running up and down the wharves, stamping barefoot on the pitchy floorings, doing the last errands of the captains, putting the hard-tack aboard, and a final cask of wine!

And the sun was down. Everybody—more than a thousand men in all, there were—was now on board. The boats were waiting only for the papers to come down from the offices. How slow those lubbers worked! The spectators on shore were beginning to get impatient, as though the curtain were late in rising on a show.

For still one ceremony had not yet been completed. From time immemorial it had been the custom of the whole village to wish the *bòu*-fleet godspeed by insulting the men who were going away. As the boats cast off, atrocious witticisms flew back and forth between deck and shore—all in good humor, of course, for such tradition would have it, and it was a test of brains, besides, to be able to say just the right word to those *lanudos*, those husbands whose eyes would be snugly plugged with wool, and come home in blessed ignorance of all their wives had been up to meanwhile! This theme of the wayward wife and the unsuspecting husband is the commonest sport—however cruel it

may seem—along the shores of the Levant; and so inveterate the habit, so inevitable the parting serenade, that some of the departing sailors went aboard with pockets or baskets full of stones, to be ready for any thrusts they could not parry with words.

And the last of the after-glow had faded. The lamps along the wharves gleamed like a rosary of fire. Red snakes of light coiled and writhed out over the placid waters of the basin. Stars, green and scarlet, shone from the peak of every mast. The sea was catching the ashen brightness of the nocturnal sky, and boats and buildings stood out in dark outlines of indigo against a vast background of nickel gray. "They're off! They're off!" Sails were being hoisted one by one, and in the night the canvas filtered the harbor lights as through veils of distended crêpe, or translucent wings of great black butterflies.

Swarming mobs of ragamuffins had occupied the points farthest projecting seaward. That would give their gibes the greatest possible range. And what fun it would be! But all ready to duck! They've got plenty of stones aboard to-night!

Slowly, gently, with barely perceptible motion in that breath of air, the first pair of boats drew out from the wharf-side, nodding idly on the swells like lazy bulls reluctant to make their dash. It was still possible from the piers to identify the teams

and the men aboard them. "Good-by! Good-by!" the women called to their husbands. *"Adiós! Bon viache!"* But the youngsters were already at it, shrieking obscenities into the night in a tumultuous uproar. "Did you ever hear such talk!" Though the very wives who caught allusions to themselves laughed as loudly as any one at the most happy scores. It was one carnival of free language, where truth ran riot with slander.

"Lanudos! Worse than *lanudos!* I know where the curate is going to stay to-night! Johnnie will take good care of her, don't worry, my lad! Moo-oo! Moo-oo!" And this mooing of cattle was supposed to evoke the image of well-horned oxen in the minds of those brave sailors who were thus being cheered on their way out into peril. But then the stones began to come, whistling like bullets and striking sparks on the rocks where the serenaders were seeking cover. The greatest uproar was at the end of the Breakwater near which every boat had to pass on its way out from the basin. And when the volleys of jest would slacken from the shore, provocation would come from the boats themselves. The sailors seemed offended if their team went past without attention. "And you've nothing to say to us, eh!" some stentorian voice of an old tar would call. *"Lanudos! Lanudos!"* the answer would come in a storm of

shouting, while the "cats" on board would begin to blow on the conches, which the boats used at sea in time of dark or fog.

On one of the rocks, in the full midst of a noisy crowd, and quite indifferent to the flying stones, stood Dolores, alone. The women who had gone down to the shore with her kept farther back away from the line of fire. Yet she was not quite alone. For a man had sauntered carelessly in her direction and finally stopped behind her. The splendid creature felt the warmth of Tonet's breath upon her neck, and her skin tingled under that burning contact. She turned her head and caught one fiery glance from his hungry eyes. And the bandaged hand, which had been drawing feigned groans of pain a few hours before, sought hers in the darkness. Free at last! For once, free! Free from fear of surprise, from thoughts of danger! Neither the Rector nor his son would be at home!

But a sudden shouting of redoubled violence awakened them from their swooning dream of guilty anticipation. "The Rector! There he goes! *Flor de Mayo!* 'Mayflower'!" And the most rousing of all the send-offs was for him. It was not only the young ones this time. Grown-ups, men and women, joined in the scathing jollity. For Dolores, the beautiful, Dolores, the bewitching, had her enemies in that throng of jealous wives. "Hey, the Rector! Hey, the prize-*lanudo!* A *toreador*

for you, when you come home! The devil will want you, for the horns you'll have! Is it Jersey or Holstein? Or just any old steer, except a short-horn! And we're telling the truth, for once!"

Tonet grew uneasy. He was in plain sight of the throng. Some one might carry the joke too far! But Dolores showed herself a true daughter of *tio* Paella! She laughed and laughed, as though the best compliments of the sailing had been for her.

And the Rector was delighted. He had always thought himself the most popular man in town! "And what else have you got to say, mutton-heads?" he challenged, as his boat glided slowly along the shore, his moon-face beaming over the varnished stern of the *Mayflower*. "What else have you got to say!" That bravado gave impetus to the pointed insolence on the Breakwater. "Look at them over there? Tonet is with Dolores! Tonet is with Dolores! *Lanudo!* Cuckold! He's leaving a happy home to-night! But Tonet will be there! No vacation for Dolores!"

The Rector let go the tiller and stood up on the stern, livid with anger! "Pigs, hogs, grunters! *Morrals! Cochinos!*"

It was all very well to make fun of him. But this bringing the name of a woman in, and his brother's too, was going a bit too strong, a bit too strong!

CHAPTER IX

"PROOFS! PROOFS! ROSARIO!"

GOD had poor folks in mind that year! The women of the Cabañal, crowding the beach in the afternoon, were sure of that. The boats had been out two nights and a day, and they were already coming home. The stiff horizon line was dotted with sails, in pairs, the *bòu*-teams hurrying shoreward before a favoring breeze, like couples of doves yoked by a belt at the water-line. The oldest women along shore could not remember such fishing! Lord, the fish just seemed to be sitting there in solid packs, waiting patiently to be scooped out. The poorest people in town would have plenty to eat for once in their lives.

The boats ran in and anchored a few yards from the surf, lowering their big sails, and swinging round to head the wind, gently, gracefully, pitching. Mobs of dirty calico skirts, red faces and tangled heads rushed to the water's edge in front of each team, the women shrieking, cursing, quarreling, arguing, as to whom the fish should go. Overboard the "cats" jumped into the water that reached

their waists, and the other men followed. A straight line of moving baskets formed between vessel and shore, human torsos rising higher and higher above the surface of the sea till bare feet touched dry sand. There the wives of the skippers were on hand to take charge of the catch.

The beach was one sparkling shining display of beauty. The fish were still alive and flopping in the baskets. Rock-salmon, like palpitating carnation petals, lay there wriggling their soft vermilion and gasping frantically for breath. Slimy devil-fish crooked their backs in agony or drew together in masses of squirming, crawling suckers. Flounders, as thin and flat as the sole of a shoe, pounded their tails vigorously about. The wide, kite-like fins of rays, quivered in their sticky glue. But squid, squid, everywhere, the most valuable prey of all! The waters off-shore seemed literally alive with squid! And the catch was tremendous. Basket after basket shone with masses of transparent iridescent crystal, the slimy crustaceans waving their tentacles desperately about, setting the black of their receptacles a-glitter with the soft colors of mother-of-pearl.

The stretch of water between the boats and the surf was as crowded as a city street. "Cats" were wading out with flagons of water on their shoulders. The sailors, tired of the lukewarm filthy drink from the hogsheads aboard, longed for a draught

from the ice-cold *font de Gas.* Tiny girls from the cabins along shore, their ragged skirts innocently rolled high above their knees, were splashing about in the puddles, looking at everything with eager curiosity, and filling their aprons with the littlest fish. Some of the vessels were to lie up on shore for a day. And the oxen, owned coöperatively by the village fishermen, splendid mastodontic creatures, yellow and white, were solemnly, majestically, deliberately, lumbering in and out of the water, shaking their enormous double chins with the gravity of Roman senators. Their polished hoofs sank deep into the sand; but they could beach the heaviest boat at a single pull. Driving them, geeing and hawing, was Chepa, a sallow round-shouldered sickly fellow, with the expression of a crabbed witch, on his fœtus-like face. He might have been fifty. He might have been fifteen. He was dressed in yellow oilskins, his bare red feet protruding from under the huge baggy trousers, the skin on them showing the outline of every tendon and every bone. As a boat would slowly scrape along up out of the water, a throng of ragged disheveled youngsters would rush down to meet it, running along beside it through the surf like a cortege of nereids and tritons, noisily begging for a handful of *cabets!*

A market was being improvised right on the beach, and sales were going on in a hub-bub of shouting, cursing, and shaking of fists. The wives

of the captains, intrenched behind their overflowing baskets, were going it hammer and tongs with the fish-women who would retail the catch next day at Valencia. When it came to the weighing, the fights would start all over again. The owners would try to keep out the big fish, *las piezas gordas;* while the buyers would object to including the small fry. Rough scales were being fashioned of baskets hung on ropes, big stones serving as weights. Some gamin from the village, who had been to school, was always on hand to volunteer as book-keeper for the owners, entering the sales in pencil on almost any piece of paper.

The vendors would move the baskets they had bought around with their feet, while the beach-combers looked on covetously. Let a fish slip off and it vanished as though through a hole in the sand. Whenever a new pair of boats came in the crowd would run to a new section of the shore and people from Valencia who had dropped down to see the sight, would find themselves nearly swept off their feet by the rude scrambling mob.

That was a great day for Dolores. For years she had figured on the beach as one in the riot of vendors merely. How she had longed to rise to the class of owners, still to haggle, of course, but to dictate terms, from a vantage point, to that dirty turbulent crowd of lower scum! And now her dream of glory was being realized! She stood

sniffing at the air through that disdainful nose of hers, straightening up full height behind her array of baskets; while Tonet—educated in the Royal Navy, if you please—was tending the scales and setting down the figures.

Her keel barely awash in the surf, the *Mayflower* was waiting for the oxen to drag her up high and dry. The Rector was still aboard, helping his men furl the sail. At times he would stop and look ashore, watching his wife fighting tooth and nail there, and calling out the figures which his brother was to set down. What a woman! Could a queen be prettier! And the poor fellow's chest heaved with pride and joy at the thought that Dolores owed all that glory to him, to him alone.

Forward, on the tip of the bow, Pascualet reared his diminutive and motionless manhood, looking more like a walrus than an eight-year-old boy, the figure-head of the boat, as it were. Barefoot, and as dirty as could be, his shirt-tail out on one side and flapping in the wind, his breast exposed to the sea-air and as tanned and red as the bust of a statue of mud, he was the admiration of a crowd of little beach-combers, who had gathered round, hardly a stitch on their bronzed limbs, so lean and bony from a life-long diet of salt fish.

But what a catch the Rector had made! His boat loaded to the scuppers with squid, and at thirty cents a pound—you figure it up yourself! The penniless

idlers on shore surveyed the wonder-worker as though a sea of dollars were pitching and tumbling out there beyond the surf. Chepa came down with his oxen, and the *Mayflower* began to climb the beach, grating along over the runners that had been laid under her bottom. Pascualo had jumped down from the deck and gone to Dolores, his face wreathed in smiles at sight of her standing there with her apron caught up to hold a peck or more of silver coins that represented her cash sales. Fairly good for two days' work, eh! A few trips like that and they'd have a pretty pile! And there was a good chance for the luck to hold! Old *tio* Batiste knew where the best places were!

But the Rector stopped and looked at his brother. The bandages on the injured hand had disappeared. So Tonet was in trim again already! That was good news to add to the good catch! He wouldn't miss the next sailing now! And he would see some real fishing, I'll tell you! Just the trouble of hauling them in, with your net full at every shot! "We'll be going out at sunrise, to-morrow morning, to make the best of this run, while it lasts!"

Dolores had sold everything; and she asked her husband if he would be going home. The Rector, however, could not say. He hated to leave the boat. The crew would be going off and getting drunk, let alone that bunch of little devils who would strip her clean of everything that could be carried the

moment his back was turned. It would probably keep him busy till way into the night. If he wasn't home by nine o'clock, she had better go to bed. Tonet should go and get his pack ready and say good-by to Rosario; so as to be on the beach an hour before dawn. There would be no waiting in such times!

Dolores looked at her husband and then at Tonet. She said she would be going along. Pascualet did not want to go with her, when she called. He would rather stay down at the boat with papa. Dolores had to start off alone, and the two men stood gazing after her beautiful figure, as, with a graceful swinging of hips and shoulders, it vanished in the distance. Tonet hung around till after dark, swapping stories and banter with *tio* Batiste, and discussing the great catch with the men of the crew. He did not leave till the "cat" began to get supper ready on board the *Mayflower*.

Left to himself, Pascualo began to walk up and down the beach, his hands stuffed into his sash, and the legs of his oilskins rasping noisily as they rubbed together. The shore was quite dark. Here and there a stove could be seen glowing on the deck of some boat, blinking as the figure of a sailor passed in front of it. The sea was shrouded in deep gloom, marked by an occasional flash of phosphorescence. The surf was trickling in with a barely audible moan. Softened by the distance

came the voices of some "cats" singing as they made their way toward the Cabañal and stirred some dog to bark along the road. A faint band of reddish light still loitered above the horizon where the sun had sunk behind the housetops.

The Rector did not like that reddish afterglow. His experience at sea had taught him to see in it the signs of unsettled weather. But that thought did not concern him long. The joy of the successful trip was too insistent still. No, things were going well, weren't they! Few men in the world with more reason to be thankful than he! A pretty home! A delicious and a frugal wife! The prospect of building another boat, before the year was out, to go in team with the *Mayflower!* And then a boy after his own heart! Pascualet took to salt water like a mackerel! Why, in time that youngster would be the best captain along shore! Better off, far, than the happy man in the story who didn't have a shirt to his back! He wouldn't have to worry about cold weather—nor rainy days! And there would be a bit left over for old age!

Gloating over his good fortune, Pascualo quickened his lumbering pace as a corpulent sea-dog, and rubbed his hands with satisfaction. But in the darkness ahead of him a figure suddenly appeared, advancing slowly in his direction. Only a woman! Some beggar, probably, making the rounds of the fleet to pick up a spare fish here and there! And

so it goes! How many poor devils there are in the world! Why shouldn't a fellow do a little something for one of them now and then! And the Rector's hand felt at a lump in the end of his sash where he had knotted a few silver coins along with a copper or two.

"Pascualo!" came the call. It was a soft, timid, hesitating voice. "Is that you, Pascualo?"

"Cristo! What a mistake! I took her for a beggar! And it's Rosario! Well, well! Looking for Tonet, I suppose! Now that's too bad! You've missed him! He's just gone home. He'll be there wanting his supper, and wondering where you are!"

But the skipper, overflowing with good humor, was taken somewhat aback when he learned that Rosario was not looking for Tonet at all. She had come to see the Rector! What was up? He had never been on very good terms with his sister-in-law. Queer she should be turning to him! However, there was nothing to be done except hear her through. He stood with folded arms, his eyes turned toward the boat where Pascualet and the other "cat" were dancing back and forth around the soup-kettle. Well, what could he do for her? He was listening! And resignedly he waited for the tale of woe he was sure would come from that figure, so vaguely outlined in the darkness, and afraid, it seemed, to begin to speak.

But Rosario with sudden resolution, threw her head energetically back, nailed two flaming mysterious eyes upon the Rector, and began to talk as though in a hurry to get through with it. She had something to say to him, something that concerned the reputation of the whole family. She could not stand it any longer! She and Pascualo had become the laughing-stock of the whole place.

"Ah! What's this you're saying? The laughing-stock of the whole place! And what are they laughing at me for, silly? Just take a look at me and the *Mayflower!* Do you see anything specially funny about us?"

"Poor Pascualo!" Rosario said, slowly this time, but in deadly earnest, and with the tone of a person prepared to face the worst, "Pascualo, Dolores is not being true to you."

Pascualo reared like a steer struck with an ax between the eyes. Then he stood dazed for an instant, his great head sunk upon his chest. But it was only for a second. That man had a deep faith in the goodness of things and people. His balance could stand harder buffets from the world than that.

"Hold your tongue, Rosario, your lying tongue, and get out of my sight. You're a liar, a liar, that's what you are!"

Had there been light enough for Rosario to see the Rector's face, she would doubtless have obeyed,

frightened. His right foot was kicking at the sand, as though the falsehood were a loathsome worm to be ground under his heel. His arm was doubled up and his fist was clenched. Words seemed to come choking from his throat.

"You rag of a woman! And don't everybody know who you are? A back-biter, a cheap gossip, and a trouble-maker. You hate Dolores! You'd do anything to hurt her! You've driven my poor brother to the dogs with your beastly temper! And now you would dirty the reputation of Dolores! And she's a saint! A saint, do you hear! And a woman like you isn't good enough to kiss the bottom of her shoe, you snake! And now, get out of here, and do it quick, damn quick! Get out of here, or I'll kill you like a rat!"

But Rosario stood there impassively. The calm determination in her did not shrink before those insults and those menacing fists.

"Pascualo, Dolores is not being true to you," she repeated slowly, and with despairing firmness. "She is making a fool of you. And the man . . . is . . . Tonet!"

The Rector stiffened in speechless fury! And his brother she would bring in too, in that low-down spiteful jealousy of hers!

"Get out of here, I say! Get out of here, Rosario, or I'll kill you as sure as ever you were born!" And he meant it, this time. He had seized

her by the two wrists, squeezing them till the bones seemed ready to break, and he threw her around on her heels. But in sudden fear, she wrenched loose, and sidled away, to a safe distance, muttering and protesting. She was not a liar, nor a jealous gossip. She had meant to do him a favor. Keep him from looking like a fool to the town. But if he was satisfied, why should any one else care? He could go on being the happy cuckold, and joy go with him. And she made off, on the run, throwing back, in insolent mockery, the epithets that had been rained on Pascualo the day the *Mayflower* put to sea: "Steer, hornpate, *llanut!*"

The Rector, his arms folded, stood looking after her till she was out of sight in the dark. Then a sense of duty well done came over his unsuspecting innocence. "Well, did you ever see anything like that? God, imagine being married to her! Poor Tonet! Swallows everything she hears, and tries to use it to get even! But I guess she got all she wanted from me! That will teach her to come tale-bearing another time. God, what a wench!" And puffing with self-righteousness, he resumed his walk, scarcely noticing that the wash from the surf was now reaching his big boots. "God, what a woman!"

But, all of a sudden, the Rector stopped. It was as though something had been brewing silently in the unconscious recesses of his soul, and then had rapidly boiled up, catching in his throat, strangling

him, filling his whole being with mortal anguish.

"She said . . . and . . . supposing it were true! How do I know she is lying!"

As Pascualo followed this trend of thought, he stamped and splashed up and down on the wet sands, driving his nails into his hands, and swearing under his breath as he swore only at sea when a blow was on. See here . . . Tonet was engaged to Dolores once! It was Tonet who had taken him to her house, in the first place. The two were together a great deal of the time. She was always talking to him about Tonet! Tonet this, Tonet that! "And I . . . I . . . never . . . God . . . the last to suspect anything! The laughing-stock of the Gulf! And yet . . . bah . . . impossible!" How that damned woman would like to see him get upset, and make trouble the way she did! Be taken in like that? Not a grown-up man, like him! And besides, what had the wench said! Nothing but what Roseta had said, and hundreds of others, but just to worry him! The men on the beach always had jokes like that on each other, to make things lively. But it was just fun! Whereas that Rosario was trying to make trouble, she was! Spiteful as a mad cat! "Bosh, lies, lies! I stand by Dolores, through thick and thin! And that boy of ours! Pascualet, the little major! And what a regular old salt, though hardly as big as a chipmunk! *Mentira! Tot mentira!*"

And the Rector stamped and splashed on up and down the beach, talking aloud, stopping, shrugging his shoulders and gesticulating, inviting the sea, the boats, the very shadows of the night, to say whether it was not all a damned lie of that crazy female. Though a wicked devil was lurking somewhere inside him; for every time that he said "lie," and the objects of the night said "lie," the word echoed within him as *"Llanut, bruto,* steer, bull, ox —with horns!"

"And, by God, if it is true . . ." What he had said to Roseta that afternoon on the way home through the Grao, came into his mind. Tonet, Dolores . . . yes, even Pascualet . . . if one of them laid a finger on his honor! "And wait a minute! A woman like that, to get even with Dolores, would slander her in public! But would she come to me intimate-like, all by ourselves. No, it would take courage to do that! She'd need to have good grounds . . . Fool I was not to let her talk . . . then I'd know the very worst!" And anything, at that moment, seemed to the Rector preferable to his state of anxious, raging torment.

"Pare! Pare!" a cheery little voice began to call from the deck of the *Mayflower.* Supper was ready! Supper! Who could care about supper with that mess on a fellow's mind! The Rector strode up to the boat, and in a tone that was surprisingly harsh and commanding, told the men

to eat their meal and go to bed, for he had something to attend to in town. If he didn't come back, they were to get up and have things ready for the start at sunrise.

Pascualo did not look at his little son, but darted, like a phantom, off along the black shore, running into boats at times, then stumbling into the deep puddles that the sea had dug out in the sand in stormy weather. But he was feeling better! It was a relief to be thinking that he would soon be talking to Rosario again. Those terrible insults she had hurled at him had stopped hurting. His brain was no longer that whirl of mad desperate ravings! He seemed to be walking on air, instead, as though his heavy body were a feather! Yet there was still a griping sensation in his throat, that caught his breath; and when he swallowed, his mouth had the bitter taste of brine. To the last word! To the last word! She would tell every blessed thing she knew, or she'd be sorry! *Recristo,* who would have said two hours before that after such a trip offshore, he would be sneaking off to the house of a woman he despised, and through the back streets so no one would see him! What a devil of a woman! Stuck the knife in just the right spot! How was it that five words from a chatter-box could spoil a man's soul like that!

He was almost running as he entered a dirty street in one of the most miserable sections of the

village, lines of dwarf olives on either hand, the sidewalks filthy with trodden dirt, and lined with two rows of shacks, the front yards fenced in with old boards. The door of Rosario's cottage was closed. He ran into it with a violence that almost snapped the latch, and as it swung open, it banged violently against the wall behind. In the murky light of a single candle, Rosario was sitting on a stool, her head between her hands. Her demeanor of sorrow and despair was quite in harmony with the desolate, ill-furnished interior of that hovel—a table, a couple of chairs, two chromos on the wall for decoration, an old mandolin, and some abandoned fish-nets. The place, as the women of the neighborhood said, had the smell of hunger and wife-beating.

Rosario looked up as the door slammed open, and the Rector's massive figure towered over the threshold, completely filling the door-way. "Oh, it's you!" she said with a bitter smile. She had been waiting for him. She knew he would come. Wouldn't he have a chair? He had been rough with her down on the beach, but she didn't mind. "We all feel that way at first! I couldn't believe it when they first told me about Tonet. I slapped the face of the woman who came to me. And then, an hour later, I went and asked her for God's sake to tell the truth. Well, you were going to kill me a little while ago. And here you are! When peo-

ple are really in love . . . they get mad at first. But then they want to know the truth, even if it pulls the heart out of them! We are both fools, Pascualo!"

The Rector had closed the door behind him, and was standing now in front of his sister-in-law, his arms folded, looking at her with a scowl of angry hostility, the instinctive hatred a man feels toward the one who wrecks his dream.

"The truth, now! The truth! Speak out! All you've got to say!" Pascualo hissed the threatening words, to put a stop to that everlasting moralizing of an idiot! Would she never get to the point? Yet, in all his menacing, raging impatience, there was terror in his soul, the wish that minutes might turn, almost, to centuries, to postpone the cruel revelation.

Well, yes, she would tell him everything! But how would he take it? What she had to say would hurt him terribly, and he must not hate her so for it. She had had her time of it too. She had suffered now till she could stand it no longer. She hated Tonet, and she hated that infamous Dolores! For her Pascualo was simply a comrade in misfortune. Dolores had been deceiving him. "Oh, it's not a matter of yesterday or day before. They've been carrying on for years—almost from the time Tonet and I were married. Tonet was a good boy. But when that thing saw some one else have him

for a husband, she set her eyes on him, and she was the one who first led him astray."

"Bosh!" roared the Rector, blind with fury and anguish. "I want proofs! I'm tired of your talk. Proofs! Proofs, Rosario! And be quick about it."

Rosario smiled pityingly at sight of such a fool! "Proofs! Proofs! Why don't you ask the whole village for proofs, proofs! They've been laughing at you for a year or more. It has been the talk of the town. You won't get angry at me? You want the whole truth? Well, even the 'cats' and the sailors on the beach, when they want to say that a man's wife is deceiving him, call him a worse *lanudo* than the Rector."

"Damn your soul!" Pascualo roared, clenching his fist and shaking it in Rosario's face. "Rosario . . . Look, Rosario, be careful what you say. Because . . . if you don't make good on every blessed word of it . . . I'll wring your neck the way I would a chicken's."

"I wish you would! I'm tired of living. What have I to live for? No children! Not a friend in the world! Work like a dog from morning till night, to give him the money I earn so as to escape a beating. And he beats me just the same! Wring my neck! That doesn't scare me! Look, Pascualo, look!"

Rosario rolled up her sleeve, and showed on the sallow skin that covered the bones and tendons of

her fore-arm, the black-and-blue marks where a heavy hand had squeezed it as in a vise. "And that's only one. I can show you others almost anywhere on my body! And they come from having complained about his bad behavior with Dolores! This one here I got this morning, when I said he ought not go to the beach with her and help her sell the fish as though he was her husband. And I said it wasn't fair to make a fool of the Rector in public like that! But you want proofs, proofs! Well, why didn't Tonet go out with you on the first trip two days ago? He hurt his hand, didn't he? Yes, but his hand got well the moment the *Mayflower* was beyond the Breakwater. And the next morning there wasn't a bandage to be seen. And everybody noticed it. And you went to sea, to stay up all night, in the cold and wet, to keep your home going for your wife, your dear Dolores! And Tonet stayed all warm and cosy at home with her, the pair of them laughing to see what a stupid, self-satisfied idiot you were! Tonet didn't sleep in this house after you sailed. And he's not here even to-night. He ran in a few moments ago, got his things and was off, saying he wouldn't be back again. And where is he, Pascualo? Over at your house of course! They are sure the *Mayflower* will keep you down on the shore all night. And Tonet is preparing to make himself at home in your place!"

"Recristo!"

The Rector raised his eyes to heaven, as he muttered the oath, in protest, it seemed, against the powers above who allow such things to happen to an honest man. But he was a stubborn fellow at bottom. His trustful, inoffensive, disposition made it hard for him to believe things like that were possible. Inwardly convinced, he nevertheless came back with a menacing rejoinder:

"You are lying, Rosario! You know that you are lying!"

But the challenge put Rosario on her mettle! "So I'm lying! Oh say, Pascualo, what's the use of talking with a man like you. You're so blind you can't see the nose on your face. What are you yelling about? What have I done to you? You're as blind as a bat, yes, sir, blind as a bat. A man with a spoonful of brains inside his skull would have seen through the situation from the first. But you . . . you don't notice anything. You never noticed whether your boy looks like you or like him!"

And that was a nasty thrust! Though the Rector's face was as brown as shoe-leather from years in the sun and the salt-air, it turned a bluish ashen pale. His knees seemed to sag as if he were going to fall, and the shock made his words come out faint, husky and stammering.

"My boy! My Pascualet! Well, whom does he look like? Spit it out, damn you! Pascualet . . .

is my boy, my boy. And he looks like me . . . like me . . . he does!"

But the laugh with which Rosario answered was the hollow, sarcastic, mocking laugh of a she-devil! Pascualo did not quite understand. What was there to laugh about in his saying that his boy was his boy? In terror he waited for her explanation. "Why, stupid! If Pascualet is your boy, he ought to look like you, oughtn't he, just as you look the way your father, old Pascualo, looked. Well, he doesn't, that's all! He looks like Tonet—eyes, shape, build, and complexion! Poor dunce of a Rector! They call you *lanudo!* But the wool on your eyes is thicker than they ever guessed! Heavens, man, take a peep at the boy! He's the living picture of Tonet, as Tonet used to be in the days when he was a boy with you, down at the tavern, and was running around like a little devil on the beach!"

The Rector did not need convincing further. He was ready to believe that now. A cataract had been removed from before his eyes, and he saw things clearly, though the world had a strange unfamiliar aspect for him, as it does to a blind man led forth for a first glimpse of it. Gospel truth! Pascualet was Tonet over again! How many times, on looking at the boy, he had had, on his own account, a feeling that he was really looking at some

one else—though just whom, he could not quite say!

Pascualo pressed a pair of clenched fists to his chest as though his heart were burning inside him and he were trying to tear it out; then he brought them down with a noisy thud upon his temples. *"Recontracordons!* God of God of God of Gods!" he groaned in a voice of agony that terrified Rosario. "Holy Christ of the Grao!" He staggered a few steps across the room, like a drunken man, and threw himself flat on the floor with a crash that shook the rickety building. He rolled over, and his legs seemed to bound from the violence of the fall.

When the Rector came to his senses again, he found himself lying on his back, and something warm and tickling was running over his cheeks, like a soft wriggling snake. He wiped his face where it hurt, with his hand, and the hand came back, as he saw in the murky candle light, all covered with blood. His nose felt hot and swollen. He understood what had happened. In going to the floor he had struck hard on his face. His nose had been bleeding in streams. Rosario was just kneeling beside him to wash the blood away with a damp cloth. The girl's look of terror brought him back to all he had been hearing, and he repelled her with a gesture of hatred.

"Don't touch me! I can get up by myself. And much obliged for all you have told me! No, no! Don't bother to excuse yourself! I'm delighted! Favors like that are never forgotten. And lucky I bumped my nose. Otherwise I might have burst a blood vessel. God, how my head aches! But never mind! Cheer up! What a time I'm going to have! I've been too good-natured in my life, I have! But why should a fellow try to do right and put his whole life into working for his family? There's plenty of loafers, and gossips, and rotten women, standing around to bring an honest man to ruin. But now watch me, and you'll see something worth while. This town is going to have something to remember the Rector by, Pascualo *el Rector,* the most famous *lanudo* of the Gulf! Ho! Ha!"

Meanwhile, as he muttered on, cursing, bellowing, puffing, threatening, he had been wiping his face with the wet cloth, as though the cool touch of it relieved the biting agony within him. Now he strode toward the door, thrusting his big hands into his sash, in a demeanor of determined resolution. Rosario rushed in front of him, an expression of horror written on her face. A flash of her mad passion for Tonet had come back to her. She was afraid he was to be killed. "Wait, Pascualo! Wait! It may be all a lie! I may have

been deceived! You know how people talk! And Tonet is your brother!"

But the Rector smiled in a cold sinister way. "I've heard enough from you. And you're right. I know you're right! And when I'm sure, I'm sure. And you're scared because you know I'm right, too. And you're afraid for your Tonet, aren't you! You love him, don't you! Well, yes, and I love Dolores, in spite of everything! Remember, whatever I do, that that girl has got me here, here, and I shall never get the stab of it out of my heart. But you're going to see, Rosario, and this whole town is going to see, how Pascualo *el llanut* goes about things like this!"

"No, Pascualo, no," begged Rosario, seizing him by his powerful hands. "Wait . . . not to-night . . . to-morrow . . . some other day!"

"Oh, I know what you are thinking about! You know where Tonet is to-night! But don't worry. You're right! Not to-night! Not to-night! Besides, I've left my knife at home. And I'm not going to kill them with my teeth! But for God's sake, get out of my way, woman. A fellow can't breathe in here!" And he brushed Rosario aside with a rude thrust, and dashed out into the dark.

The Rector's first sensation on finding himself alone was one of relief and pleasure, as though he had just escaped from a furnace. And he breathed

deeply and deliciously of the cold breeze that was growing noticeably stronger. Not a star was shining now. The sky was overcast, and Pascualo, in spite of his situation, with the instinct of a sailor, first took account of the weather. "Bad day to-morrow!" he commented. Then the sea and the storm passed from his mind. He began to walk, and he walked and walked, moving his legs mechanically, indifferent to direction, hardly knowing that he was walking, though each footstep seemed to ring in his brain with a grating irritating echo. He was as unconscious, almost, as he had been back there in Tonet's cabin after his fall. He was asleep, but standing up, and his feet going, in a dream, but going rapidly, in spite of the paralysis of all his senses. He did not notice that he was walking round and round over the same streets.

Then a feeling came back to him, and again it was one of pleasure. How nice it was to be walking around in the dark over roads that would seem too ugly to be worth while by daylight! It was the fugitive's joy in the desert, where he is free from human beings and under the protecting wing of solitude. There, in the distance, was a glimmer of light. A drinking place, probably! And he turned, all a-tremble, in the opposite direction, as though a danger lay that way. Oh, if some one should see him! He would die of shame. The most insignificant "cat" would be too much for him! No,

silence, darkness, to be alone, was all he wanted!

So he walked the streets of the village and then down on the beach, which also seemed to terrify him. "God, how those fishermen must have been making fun of me!" Probably all the boats there were in the secret and when they creaked it was their way of laughing at the wool they saw on the eyes of the *Mayflower's* captain! Occasionally he would awaken from the torpor in which he was wandering doggedly from place to place. One time he came to himself just long enough to see that he was boarding his boat. At another, he found himself on his own door-step with his hand about to raise the latch. No, somewhere else, somewhere else. A moment's quiet and calm! There would be time for that, later! In the end, shocks like these gradually roused him from his anguished abstraction.

No, he would never put up with it! Never! People were going to find out what sort of a man the Rector was! But after all, it wasn't necessary to be too hard on Dolores. She was running true to form—a real daughter of *tio* Paella, drunkard that he had been, patron and agent of the girls in the Fishmarket section, talking around his house as though Dolores were some member of his "flock"! What could she ever have learned from a man like that! To be a bad girl, that's all, and no decency whatever. And that was how, just how, she had

turned out! But you couldn't blame her, could you? The real one to blame was he himself, great fool that he had been, ever to think of marrying a woman who had to be just what Dolores was!

Hadn't *siñá* Tona always said so? Mother saw through her from the start, and had never wanted a girl of *tio* Paella's in the family. A bad woman, Dolores, granted! But he couldn't talk very loud if he had married her with his eyes open. But Tonet! What could you find to say for him! Disgracing your own brother! Who ever heard of monstrousness like that! Your own brother! No, you cut the heart out of a beast of that kind!

But scarcely had his blood-thirsty schemes of vengeance taken shape in his mind, that old habits of thinking had their say. There was Rosario reminding him that Tonet was his brother! Wasn't it just as monstrous for a brother to kill a brother as to betray him? One such case in the history of the world—Cain, and what sort of a chap had Cain been? Not much, to judge by what don Santiago said of him! And then again, was Tonet really to blame? "No, Pastualo! You're to blame yourself, and nobody else. I see it all clear as day. You robbed Tonet of his sweetheart. That boy and Dolores were lovers before you even thought of speaking to a girl of *tio* Paella's! Now that was a mean trick, come to think of it! Marry your brother's promised bride! As rotten a thing as ever

I did! And so, what else could you expect? There they are together all the time—as had to be, brother-in-law, sister-in-law—and both in the family. Well, could you expect them not to fall in love again?"

He stopped in his tracks for a moment, so obvious, so crushing, did the sense of his own guilt come back to him. He looked around. It was the beach, there, under his feet; and a few steps away was the tavern of his mother. The blackening rotting boat, rising from the reed enclosures around it, called up a flood of memories from the past. There they had played together, he and Tonet, running about over the sands. Tonet was on his shoulder, pulling at his hair in angry petulant disgust at not having his own way. Just inside those walls, the old stateroom, and the warm quilt thrown over the two of them! How tenderly he had cared for his little brother, his comrade in poverty, who had rested his little brown head sometimes on his very cheek! Yes, Rosario had been right. His brother! More than that, his child! For it was he, really, more than *siñá* Tona, who had been a loving parent to the boy, spoiling him, slaving for him! "And now, I'm going to kill him! God, what beast would commit a crime like that?" No, he would forgive Tonet. Why be a Christian otherwise? Why, otherwise, believe in all the things don Santiago talked about?

The absolute solitude of the sea-shore, the dark-

ness as black as the night before Creation, the complete aloofness from every human being, brought a touch of sweetness back into that travailing spirit, with the impulse toward forgiveness. Pascualo was recovering to a new life. It seemed as though another being were inside him, and thinking for him. Anguish had put an edge on his intelligence. God was his only companion in that loneliness. With God he would have to reckon. And did God care if a man found his wife unfaithful? What a small detail that must seem to a Being as great as that! Just like a pair of rats down there on earth! No, much more important it must seem to God for a fellow to be good, and not answer treason with murder . . . murder!

Slowly the Rector turned back toward the Cabañal. How much better he felt, now! The cold breeze, rapidly growing stronger, had found a way into the furnace within him. But how weak and faint he felt! He had not eaten a mouthful since breakfast the day before. And his nose must have been broken by the fall, it pained him so! One! Two! A church bell rang in the distance. Two o'clock! What a night! And how it had flown! But the hours still to pass before morning would probably seem much longer!

As the Rector reached the road, he heard a boy's voice begin to sing. Some "cat" on the way to his boat. In fact, there the youngster was, on the other

sidewalk, with two oars on his shoulder and a roll of nets under his arm.

The sight of the boy upset him again. Now the Rector understood that there were two Rectors under that one hide of his. One of them was the usual man he had always been—good-natured, taciturn, with kindly feelings for everybody. The other, a beast that began to roar and claw inside him at the thought of being deceived, and which snarled for blood in the presence of betrayal. And Pascualo laughed a shrill high-strung laugh! Pardon! Forgiveness! What a cowardly whimperer that other Rector was! See how the imbecile had sniffled at a lot of humbug memories back there near the tavern of *siñá* Tona! *Lanudo!* Just the name for a coward like that! Fine sentiments those had been to justify a man without the guts to protect his own dignity as a man! Such stuff might do very well for don Santiago! It was a curate's job to find pretty words and say them. But he was a sailor, thank God, with the life of a young bull in him; and if anybody tried funny business on him, by God, he would get what was coming to him, with some to boot. *Lanudo!* Coward!

And ashamed in his own eyes for his past weakness, the skipper began to thump his fists on his chest, swearing at himself in his other ridiculous personality, where he was so good-natured and easy-going. Forgiveness! Forgiveness might be

all right in a graveyard. But he was living in a village where people were alive and knew each other. In a few hours they would be up and out on the streets, walking past him as that "cat" had just walked past, but nudging each other at sight of him and whispering: "There goes Pascualo *el llanut!*" Never! Ch—st, he would die first! His mother hadn't brought him into the world to be the butt of the whole Cabañal. First, Tonet! And then Dolores! And then every damned man who got in his way. And then—well, then,—what were jails for, anyway, but for men worth the salt they eat! And if it was worse than jail . . . ready for that, too. He might die at sea sometime, anyhow. Well, suppose they did squeeze his gullet up there on a scaffold! He would be dying like a sailor with good boards under his feet. And they would know they were garroting a man, and not a weakling!

He broke into a run, his elbows drawn in, and his head lowered, roaring as though he were running to grapple with a mortal enemy. In the dark he collided with posts and trees. But he did not care. A mad instinct to kill, to destroy, was carrying him wildly toward his dwelling.

He tore at the latch violently, but the door was locked. He began to pound and kick and throw himself against it, till the hinges and fastenings creaked under the blows. He opened his mouth to shout, insult the wretches inside, call to them to

come out and be killed, spit upon their heads the terrible threats that were boiling in his feverish brain. But he could say nothing. His tongue seemed to be paralyzed in his throat. His whole strength had gone to his hands, that were pulling at the latch, and into his feet, that were eating into the wood of the door with the hobnails on his boots.

And all that was not enough. He would have done anything to fill those guilty rats with terror! And he stooped down, picked up a big stone, and hurled it with all his might into the door, which boomed in agony and made the whole house tremble.

Then silence! The Rector thought he heard several windows in the neighborhood opening cautiously at the uproar. He wanted vengeance, but he didn't have to make the whole town laugh in the meantime! A sense of the absurdity of the situation came over him—the thought of himself storming out there in the street while the lovers were inside quite comfortable. What a clown he would be if he were seen! He ran off around the corner of the house and crouched there in hiding. There was talking for a time and some laughter. Then the windows were closed again, and the street relapsed into complete silence.

The Rector had good eyes, trained to seeing far into the darkest nights. From his corner, the door of the house was quite visible. There he would stay till the sun came up, if need be. He would

wait for his brother! His brother? No, for that dog of a Tonet! When the wretch came out . . . what a pity his knife wasn't handy! But he could kill him somehow, either strangle him, or perhaps pound his head in with a stone. Afterwards, he would go in and fix the woman, rip her open with the butcher-knife, or something of the sort. There was time to think of that. Something better, even, might occur to him while he was waiting.

Crouching at his corner there, the Rector began to think of all the tortures he had ever heard of, gloating over each new marvel of cruelty as he applied it, in foretaste, to the guilty pair, finally coming down to burning them alive on the open beach over a slow fire made of timber from the old boats. But how cold it was getting to be! And how sick he was feeling! The mad rage that had come over him at sight of the "cat" was passing, leaving him in a condition of general weakness and lassitude. He could barely lift his hand. The dampness of the night was getting into his bones, and his empty stomach gave him waves of nausea. Suffering did take hold of a fellow! How sick! How sick! Another reason for killing that pair of good-for-nothings! In the end they would finish him with worry and pain! He had grown old over night. It had all happened since sundown. And there he was, a strong man, unable to lift a finger!

One! Two! Three! Three o'clock! How time

dragged on. But he did not move from his ambush, though he felt his limbs stiffening and his brain begin to fag. The thoughts of dire punishments had passed from his mind. That, indeed, had become a blank. What was he doing there? He couldn't quite remember at times—all his energies were so centered in his eyes, which not for a second even left that door of his house.

Half-past three had long since tolled when the Rector thought he heard the slight grating of a latch, and saw his door swing open. A form appeared on the threshold and stayed there for a second or two, as though the person were studying the street in both directions to see if any one were watching. There was another squeak, and a slight thud as the door closed. The Rector stood painfully up, his joints quite numb from the cold. At last his time had come! And he dashed forward on the run.

But the figure in front of the door was supported on a pair of wonderful legs. When it saw another man approaching, it gave one bound and went tearing off down the street. Early risers in the houses along the road heard the clatter of racing footsteps on the brick sidewalks as the pursuit swept by, a panting heart-breaking chase in the dark. The Rector could see a white spot in front of him, the pack of clothing the fugitive was carrying over his shoulder; but despite his best efforts, he realized

that clew would soon be lacking; for the distance between him and his intended victim opened wider at every yard. Those bandy legs of his were just the thing to walk a deck in bad weather, but on the racetrack! . . . Besides, that wait there hadn't done him any good, and Tonet had been famous as a runner when he was a little boy. At a cross-road, in fact, the white pack had vanished into void. Pascualo went hunting through the streets on either side, but he could not find even a footprint.

People were beginning to be up and about in the Cabañal, men, for the most part, who had work to do on the shore. And the Rector himself now fled, in terror at the thought that some one might see him. There was nothing left to be done now. He had lost all hope of vengeance. And shivering with cold, too weak to think even, resigned to whatever fate should have in store for him, he made his way toward the beach. Things were already stirring about the boats there. The dark sands were flecked all along with lanterns as the sailors went about their work. And here was another light—from the door of the tavern-boat. Roseta had just taken down the wooden shutter over the counter and she could be seen through the opening, wrapped in a shawl, her halo of blonde curly hair shooting rebellious strands out from under the kerchief over her head. She was still but half awake, and her face was pinched and blue from the cold. She was

on the lookout for early customers, and a bottle of brandy with glasses was out on the board. *Siñá* Tona was still asleep in her stateroom. Knowing hardly what he was about, Pascualo turned in that direction, and did not stop till his elbow was on the counter.

"Give us a glass!" But Roseta, instead of obeying him, stood there looking at him with bright though expressionless eyes that seemed to penetrate to the innermost of his spirit. The Rector winced. That girl! That girl! What a keen one! She had caught everything at a glance! And the skipper, to get out of his hole, fell back on violence. "Good God! Have you got ears on your head? Give me a glass, I said." And a glass, for that matter, he really needed, to dispel the mortal lethargy that had settled on his whole body. A sober man he was! But he would drink, and drink and drink till he was drunk, and drown his torpor in alcohol!

And he downed a glass. And then another, and still a third, one gulp to each. His sister passed the drinks across the counter, but her eyes were still fixed upon him, as though she could read everything that had happened written out on his features in black and white. But he was feeling better, so much better! Nothing like *aguardiente,* to brace a fellow up! The damp chill of morning seemed to be burning off, all of a sudden, and a pleasant tingling began to run up and down just under his skin. The

humor of the situation caught him now. How funny he must have looked beating it down the street as though the devil were after him, puffing like a porpoise! And then the world took on a rosy hue. He must be a good fellow, love everybody, and beginning with that girl there, his sister, who, for her part, had not taken her eyes off him once.

"Yes, why not tell the truth! You're the real credit to our family, Roseta girl! The rest of us? Hogs, hogs, beginning with me! Me! No, Roseta, you're all there—something nice, delicate-like, about you. You see through things, with the cleverest of them. But you say things—oh, I don't know—you say things, diplomatic-like, so's they don't come down on a fellow like a thousand of brick! Oh, I remember, I do! On the way home through the Grao, that day! Other people, they just rub it in, till you're ready to damn your soul. But it's what you've got up here, up here! Brains you've got, brains! You were right all these years. Scamps and puddingheads, puddingheads and scamps! And you're going at it right, I say. You keep the men away. You don't slobber all over them, and then lie to them, and make donkeys of them, and ruin them. No, you're a real girl, Roseta, better than the best of them."

With that liquid fire on his empty stomach, the Rector grew more and more emphatic as he talked on. His arms began to gesticulate, and his voice

rose and rose, till his words were audible yards away.

"Is that you, Pascualo?" The call came from behind the curtains in *Siñá* Tona's stateroom, hoarse and halting, but affectionate withal.

"Yes, ma, it's me. Just going down to the boat to see what's going on. I wouldn't get up, just yet, if I were you. Going to be bad weather!"

In fact, daylight was now breaking, and along the horizon where the water darkened to a strip of black, another band, of faint livid light, was stretching. The sky was still overcast, and a thick fog was coming up the shore, softening the edges on trees and boats and houses, dimly visible in the brightening twilight.

"Well, one more glass, and that will do." And the Rector passed a calloused hand over his sister's cold cheek. "Good-by, girl! But remember what I say, you're the only decent woman in the Cabañal. It's your brother talking, Roseta. The only decent woman in the Cabañal, yes! And if a man asks you to marry him, say 'no,' say 'no.'"

Pascualo was whistling unconcernedly as he sauntered up to the *Mayflower*. You would have thought him the happiest man on earth, but for the yellowish glitter in his eyes, that seemed to be bulging from their sockets in his red face flushed with alcohol. In a conspicuous position on deck, and standing up full height to advertise the fact

that he was there, Tonet was in full view—at his feet the white pack that had just been having such a dance of it through the dark streets of the Cabañal.

"Hello, Pascualo!" he called, the moment he spied his brother, at much pains apparently to start a conversation and dispel any suspicion the Rector might have. And could you beat that for impudence, the sneaking weasel! But before the Rector, who felt all the wild rage of a few hours previous boiling up anew, could answer, a crowd of sailors and skippers came running up. "What do you think of it, Pascualo?" they were calling. "Going to blow, do you think?" And they gathered around him, but without taking their eyes off the horizon. There was a scowl in that sky! Crazy to think of going out! And just their luck! Of course, it had to come then, when the fish were as thick as fleas outside, and you could pick them up with your hands! But after all, a man's hide is of more account than a dollar! They all agreed. Dirty weather ahead! Nothing to do but stick to cover.

But not so Pascualo. "Stick to cover, eh! Well, you fellows can stay ashore if you want to, and twirl your fingers. I'm going out, and right now. I never saw a blow yet that would keep me home, when I'd made up my mind to go. The woman folks ought to stay at home. But I like to see men and not cowards in the fish business." He spoke

in a tone of voice that did not seem to invite argument, and as though the suggestion of his staying in had veiled an insult. He turned his back on the skippers around, to get away from them, get away from everybody, who might know, and . . . laugh! "Into the water with her, boys!" And the oxen came out of the barn and down toward the shore. "Hey, *Flor de Mayo* there! Overboard, all hands, and get the skids down!"

The men in the crew obeyed their orders as they were trained to do, unquestioningly. Only *tio* Batiste raised a voice of protest, and he spoke with his full authority as a bull-dog of the sea.

"God, man, where are your eyes this morning! Don't you see the wind off there! Blowing like hell, man alive!"

"Oh, that ain't wind, that's rain, *agüelo!* No, no, it's going to settle down to raining. An hour or two of chop, perhaps, but not enough to make a chicken sea-sick!"

"Well, it's rain or it's wind. But if it's wind, the way it looks from here, it's all day with the man that gets into it!"

"Oh, go along home, *tio,*" the Rector snapped with a rudeness he had never used toward that old salt before. "There's a job up at the church for you, janitor or something. This boat is no place for cowards nor for invalids!"

"Coward, is it? Coward, eh? I've been to

Havana twice in a fifty-footer, belly of a sick whale! And on the rocks twice, in weather that would make you blue in the gills! By God, take twenty years off this back of mine, and I'd rip you up the front for saying that, the way I would a codfish! But into the water she goes, boys! When the captain speaks, it ain't for the likes of me to raise a voice. Into the water with her, boys, and to hell with her!" And the furious old sailor was through grumbling in time to help lay the last skid before the *Mayflower's* bow touched the surf. Another pair of oxen was already pulling at the boat that was to go team with the Rector's newer craft; and in a few moments both vessels had raised their huge lateen sails, and were dashing fast through the outer breakers with every stitch of canvas drawing.

The skippers ashore stood looking on perplexedly. The Rector's outfit was now well out to sea, and jealousy began to rage within them. That *lanudo* had gone mad! The idea of putting to sea in the teeth of a threat like that! But he had his eye on the market! Making a clean-up, eh? While they were standing around with their hands in their pockets! It angered them, this selfish impudence, as though the Rector were out to catch all the fish left in the sea. The boldest and most jealous took the lead. "Well, sir, where he can go, I can go! Does he think he's the only man that

can sail a boat around here? Haul her out, Chepa, haul her out, and be quick about it!"

The challenge was taken up all along the shore. *"Boyero! Boyero!"* Everybody began calling for the oxen at once, and the drivers did not know which way to turn. The madness of the Rector seemed to spread like wildfire from one end of the beach to the other. The women ashore began to shriek and protest at seeing their men go out in the face of the dread east wind. Curse that skinflint Rector! Better stay home and watch his wife! Did he want to drown everybody in the Cabañal? *Siñá* Tona, in her underclothing, her thin gray hair undone and blowing in the wind, came running down to the water's edge. They had told her what the Rector had been up to. She had jumped out of bed to stop him.

"Pascualet!" she called. "Pascualet! *Fill meu, torna, torna!* Come back, come back!" But the two boats were already far, far, offshore.

And the poor woman, knowing that they could not hear her voice, began to wail and tear her hair, crying to God and to the saints in heaven! *"Maria santísima!* He is going to his death, the death of him, I say! *Reina y soberana!* Both my boys, and the little one, too!" What a curse had settled on her family! That pig of a sea would swallow them all, as it had killed her husband!

And the other women joined in her lamentation. But the men worked on in sullen frowning silence, unable to resist the jealous rivalry that was hurling them into the jaws of death in their relentless struggle for bread. They splashed out into the surf, till the water reached their belts. They climbed aboard their boats, and raised the sails. And soon a line of great white wings was vanishing into the mist, madly rushing seaward through the white caps, under a sky already lowering with tempest and black with the scowl of fateful augury.

CHAPTER X

"AND STILL THEY SAY FISH COMES HIGH!"

FOUR hours later the *Mayflower* was off Sagunto in the channel which *tio* Batiste, with his habit of judging more from the bottom than from landmarks on shore, was tracing between the *Roca del Puig* and the kelp grounds of Murviedro. Not a boat had dared go so far from home that day. The rest of the fleet could be dimly seen, strung out on the horizon in a wide arc from in front of Valencia to the offings of Cullera. The sky was a leaden gray; the sea a deep purple, turning to an ebony black in the troughs of the waves. The wind came in a succession of long frigid squalls that whipped the sails about and whistled through the rigging. The *Mayflower* and its running mate kept on, however, under full sail, dragging the *bòu*-net that was getting heavier and heavier from minute to minute.

The Rector was posted astern, at the tiller, heading the *Mayflower* into the menacing gusts, more from instinct than anything else; for his eyes were not on the water. They were fixed on Tonet, who had been trying to avoid their piercing gaze ever

since the boat left shore. At times they would shift to little Pascualet, who was standing rigid at the foot of the mast, throwing his diminutive chest out in challenge to that sea, which, on his second voyage, was beginning to show its temper. The *Mayflower* was now pitching heavily as the waves came stronger and stronger; but the sailors sauntered casually back and forth about their work, as if nothing unusual were going on, though a false step would have thrown them overboard.

The Rector looked from Tonet to the boy and from the boy to Tonet. An expression of doubt gradually changing to conviction was written on his face, as he compared them feature by feature, minutely. No, Rosario had not deceived him. Where had his eyes been all those years not to have noticed the astonishing resemblance? And Pascualo's face grew paler and paler under its deep sunburn; his eyes were blood-shot as they had been the night before, and he pressed his lips tightly together to hold in the angry words that were tingling on his tongue and gathering in his throat. God, how people must have been laughing at him! Look at the boy! The very same face, the very same ways! Who could mistake them? Pascualet was little Tonet all over again, the frail nervous child he had tended like a nurse-maid in the tavern-boat. No, that was Tonet's boy, no use denying it, the living, visible proof of his dishonor! And as this conclusion

settled deeper in the skipper's mind, he tore at the flesh through his open shirt front, and frowned with sullen animosity at the water, the boat, and the sailors, who kept looking at him out of the corners of their eyes, wondering why the captain was in such a black temper, though it was owing probably to the weather.

And why should he go on slaving like a dog? To earn money for that wench of a woman who had been making a public fool of him all this time? And create a future for Pascualet, leave him the richest fisherman in the Cabañal? No, no, no! There was nothing left for him to live for. Die, then, and take with him to destruction all he had been working for! and the *Mayflower,* his other child, that he talked to as he would have to a daughter—yes, her, too, away with her, and perish with her the very memory of the sweet hopes and dreams that had gone into the building of her. He wished to God that one of those big waves, instead of filling under the boat's bow and throwing her rudely about on its foaming crest, would open underneath her keel and let her drop to the bottom.

A signal came from the *Mayflower's* teammate. The net was dragging so heavy now from the huge catch inside that the boats were making scarcely any headway. Wasn't it about time to haul her in? Pascualo smiled bitterly! What the devil did he care! Certainly, haul her in when you

please! The crew began pulling at the cable that stretched from the lower edge of the net to either boat, and they pulled and pulled joyously. In spite of the wet weather and the back-breaking exertion, Tonet and the sailors were in great glee. This was something like a haul! A hundredweight at every foot!

But *tio* Batiste, from his place on the tip of the bow, where every dash of spray was reaching him, gave a sudden call:

"Look, Pascualo, Pascualo! Look! There she comes! There she comes!"

The old fisherman was pointing to the horizon, where the leaden mantle of cloud seemed to be condensing into a blackish vapor. The Rector had been watching the men hauling at the net. The little boy and Tonet happened to be standing side by side, and the resemblance between them was more striking than ever.

"Pascualo, man alive! Pascualo!"

"What's up!" the Rector answered, coming to himself.

"The hurricane! It's coming! It's on top of us!"

The mass of black was driving rapidly nearer, and spreading out as it advanced. Overhead a livid flash of lightning seemed to rend the sky in twain, and the thunder crashed, as though a huge piece of canvas had been ripped asunder. And a moment after, the *levante* itself, that dread easterly gale that

never blows in the Gulf of Valencia but with the breath of doom!

As the tornado struck the *Mayflower,* the vessel went over on her beam ends as though a giant hand had seized her by the keel and were trying to roll her over. The water came up over the lee rail almost to the hatches. The great lateen sail was flat on the sea like a sheet. Then as the vessel righted partly, down again, and again!

All this was the work of an instant. The first tremendous blast of the hurricane had caught the sail full, and about capsized the boat. But *tio* Batiste and the Rector scrambled along the almost perpendicular deck to the mast, loosened the peak-halyards and let the yard down. Freed from the pressure of the sail, the *Mayflower* came back to an even keel with the next wave. But Pascualo had had to let go the tiller, and the boat was wallowing in the trough, spinning round and round like a top in the boiling waters. The Rector was crawling back to the helm, with the idea of putting the *Mayflower's* head to the wind. She would not come round, however. The heavy net now held her fast by the stern, though a moment before it had kept the vessel from foundering by acting as a counter to the violent pulling of the sail.

The skipper looked around for his running mate. She came booming down the wind, dismasted, her sail overboard, her stern to the blow. She had cut

loose from the net to keep from going over and was being tossed to leeward by the gale. The waves piled up behind her steep as walls, the tops blowing off every one of them and crashing down on her decks in a deafening roar. But she had done well, all the same. The *Mayflower,* too, must get free from the seine, and try to make Valencia. A knife was laid to the cable. It snapped at the next pitch of the vessel, which, with the tiller hard down, came round into the wind. The sail had slipped down to the deck, the cross-boom sticking within easy reach of the hand. But that bit of canvas caught the hurricane with tremendous force, bending the mast threateningly and giving considerable headway to the *Mayflower,* which was taking every comber over forward.

In that critical extremity the Rector became his real self again. "All hands, attention! Obey orders, and be quick about it. We've got to come about!" That was the supréme moment. If one of those water-mountains caught her abeam, it would all be over in a second. Pascualo, upright, his feet glued to the deck, had his eyes on the waves ahead, studying every comber carefully as it swept toward the vessel. He was looking for a smooth one among those driving ridges of water—some pocket in the gale, which would enable him to swing around without turning turtle.

"Now, now, now . . . ah . . . ah . . . ah!"

The *Mayflower* veered like a shot, sank into a great yawning chasm between two smooth but almost perpendicular walls, and she had her stern to windward just as the next huge breaker came, lifting the whole vessel aft, shoving her nose under forward, and tossing her to leeward as with a mighty punch in the back. Trembling, staggering, she broke free. The crew, catching their breath from the terror of the moment, looked out after the great green mountain as it passed on. They saw it curve in a somber arch of emerald over the other craft, dismantled, that was drifting helpless before the storm. The enormous comber broke, like a mine exploding, with cataracts of foam, and water thrown on high in columns. And when the giant, literally blown to pieces by the gale, had disappeared, to be followed by other billows just as noisy and just as high, the surface of the sea was bare, save for a piece of timber and a barrel with the head gone.

"Requiescat in pace!" tio Batiste murmured crossing himself and lowering his head. Tonet and the two sailors, pale and haggard, answered instinctively: *"Amen!"*

"Pare! Pare!" Pascualet was calling in terror, pointing toward the bow. The other "cat," his comrade, had been there when the *Mayflower* started to plunge. Now he was gone! The great Destroyer had swept him overboard, and no one had seen!

Panic seized on the crew, in that ghastly moment of supreme peril. The deafening thunder claps followed one on the heels of the other. Chain-lightning hissed and snapped close by in all directions over the leaden sky, snakes of fire that seemed to be darting into the water to quench their flaming entrails; and the bangs of thunder came, some of them short, crackling like the roll of musketry; others deep, prolonged, booming. The rain was coming down in a torrential cascade, as though the sky were trying to fill up the valleys in the sea and make its power more violent.

But the Rector took the crew in hand. "God, have we sailors or women aboard here? And you came from the Cabañal, and are afraid of a bit of sea! You'd think you fellows had never been offshore! This isn't going to last. These easterlies are always freakish things! But anyhow! What's the use of getting scared? It's a sailor's place to die at sea! I always said so: sooner a lobster than a mumbling parson and the worms! Pull yourselves together, boys. And lash yourselves to something. The boat's all right. Just don't get washed overboard!"

Tio Batiste and the two sailors knotted the ends of their sashes around the mast. Tonet tied the little boy securely to a ring astern; but seeing that his brother, for a show of bravado, had sat down beside the tiller free, he crouched at the railing, brac-

ing himself against a chock on the deck. A funereal silence settled on the *Mayflower*. The sea was now in such commotion that the kelp on the bottom showed its streamers in the troughs of the waves. The crests of foam were turning a dirty yellow from the mud stirred up. Spray, rain, bits of seaweed, lashed the faces and hands of the sailors cruelly. They were all now soaked to the skin.

As the vessel rose to the crests, the keel half out of water aft, the Rector could see other boats from the Cabañal in the distance, vanishing in the mists of the horizon. They were all running with poles virtually bare, scudding before the wind for shelter, though it would be much more dangerous making port than to hold to the open sea. And the claws of remorse sank deep into Pascualo's heart. He seemed to be awakening from a horrible dream. That night of horror passed in the streets of the village! Those four glasses of brandy at the tavern! That argument with the men on shore, and his impulse to put to sea! Could he have been guilty of all that? A more criminal wretch he was than the pair who had betrayed him. If he had been tired of life, he could have tied a rock around his neck and jumped off the Breakwater! But what right had he to drive all those innocent boys to death? What would the people at home say of him? It was his fault that half the fishermen had gone out in the very teeth of the gale that morning! And

then, his other boat! Every soul aboard her lost, and because they had obeyed his orders like true fishermen! And how many other vessels had met the same fate? There was deep shame on his face as he looked at *tio* Batiste and the two sailors, lashed to the mast there and whipped and bleeding in the storm! He did not choose to look at his brother nor at Pascualet. Little it mattered if they should die—for at thought of them the thirst for vengeance flamed in him anew. But the other two, sons of mothers, old and dependent on them for support, and *tio* Batiste, who had survived so many dangers through all those years! Those surely he had no right to kill! And the sight of the three men crouching there on the wet deck, the ropes cutting into their flesh as they held on, half stunned under the buffets that rained upon them like hammer blows, drove all sense of his own danger from the Rector's mind. He scarcely noticed the waves that came splashing up around him. Nothing seemed able to stir that huge frame of his, but an anguish had reëntered his soul sharper and more racking than that of the night before. He must live, save himself, leave his personal affairs for later settlement, but meanwhile get those men ashore, get those men ashore, all of them, and not add to the burden that the lost "cat" and the crew of his other boat had put upon his conscience.

The Rector centered his whole mind on the

handling of the *Mayflower*. No need for worry just at present. That hull would stand any sea and they did not have to buck the storm. But how get into the harbor? That was the crucial effort in which so many came to grief. Ahead, just visible through the rain, the spray and the mist, the Breakwater could already be seen, its back looming above the water like a whale driven aground by the gale. How double that projecting point?

From succeeding crests the skipper studied the rocks that were churning in a hell of surf, and his heart sank within him at thought of the struggle ahead. Not another sail was in sight. Many boats, perhaps, had gotten in. The rest were already lost. On top of the Breakwater, many, many black points, people, probably, who had come, crazy with fear, to watch the ghastly combat between man and the elements.

All the Cabañal had started down to the giant wall of red rocks as the first crashes of the storm had broken; and the people, indifferent to the breakers that might easily sweep them off, had gathered on the point in front of the lighthouse, as though their presence there might be of some help to their dear ones in the fight to enter the harbor. Under the torrential downpour women kept coming on the run, the rain biting at their faces, the gale washing their skirts about and whistling in their ears. And they stood there on the rocks, their

shawls soaked through, praying, screaming, raising their hands to heaven. Men in oil skins and sea boots came hurrying along the shore, jumping from stone to stone, stopping many times, when they reached the Breakwater, to let a wave go by as it leapt over that obstruction into the inner harbor, leaving the red granite shining with the angry sweat of the tempest.

On the farthest projection of the jetty, where the storm surf was dashing highest against the outer rocks, stood Dolores, bareheaded, her face pale, clinging to *siñá* Tona, who was wild with anguish for her boy, her Pascualet, who was still out there! And the two women, with others also, cursed heaven with the foulest blasphemies, afterwards, suddenly, to bow their heads, crossing their hands over their breasts, and suppliantly promising masses, candles, offerings, to the Virgin of Rosario and the Holy Christ of the Grao, addressing those miraculous beings pleadingly, intimately, as though the divinities were present in the flesh there before them. Dolores finally drew her shawl about her and crouched for shelter behind the outermost rock, the wash from the surf climbing up around her legs, but her eyes she held seaward with the fixed motionless stare of a sphinx. On a stone farther back *tia* Picores towered on high with her massive bony frame. Anger writhing at her mouth, and her fists clenched in threat, she faced the sea with the sublimity of a

tragic witch, insulting the wild turmoil with the gibes of the Fishmarket: "Pig of a sea! Street-walker! Sow! They call you a woman, but you're a man, I say!"

The rain came in horizontal sheets before the gale, which caught individuals not clinging to their neighbors and tossed them around like reeds. All the anxious watchers were wet to the skin and their clothes clung dripping to their bodies; but absorbed in the enthralling horror of the spectacle, they were unconscious of the chill that was beginning to make their teeth chatter. A curse on the Rector's head! That cuckold was to blame for everything! He was the one responsible for the fleet's going out. It would serve him right if he never got in! And Dolores and *siñá* Tona caught such angry words, and lowered their heads in shame under public condemnation.

But one by one the boats rounded the Breakwater, cheered by the crowd, and greeted by sobs and cries of joy from the families of the crews who ran off toward the Grao to meet their men. Soon so many of them were in that the throng of the Breakwater was noticeably smaller. The harbor entrance had turned to a veritable hell of wind and wave and whirlpool. Three boats were still in sight, and for an hour, while the people ashore stood gripped in maddening suspense, they tacked and veered in the hurricane, struggling against the dread

currents that kept sweeping them down the coast. At last they, too, got in, and a great sigh of relief and satisfaction rose from the crowd.

But it was then that the black horizon was suddenly cleft by another speck. A boat was driving shoreward in mad career though a mere shred of canvas was visible at the foot of the bare pole. The sailors who had crept out to the most exposed rocks and were lying there on their stomachs to offer least exposure to the wind and waves, looked at one another despairingly. Too late, they all agreed. That straggler would be the blood offering to the sea! Impossible to enter now!

Sharp eyes soon made out the identity of the craft. *Flor de Mayo! Flor de Mayo!* The boat came on, now swallowed in the deep trough, now rearing on the crests of the combers. *Siñá* Tona and Ḍolores began to shriek and scream like mad. They seemed bent on rushing out into the water, and actually tried to reach one of the sea-swept boulders that stood out in the surf like heads of giants peering above the turmoil. And the sympathy and sorrow that misfortune brings to multitudes now turned to the two women. Curses at the Rector ceased. Sailors gathered round them with assurances that everything would be all right, though some of the men, foreseeing the inevitable end of the ghastly battle, tried to prevent them from

looking on. And so an hour passed. A sight to turn your hair white!

Pascualo, out at sea, felt the need of encouragement in his anxiety. And he called to *tio* Batiste.

"You know the Gulf, *tio*," he shouted. "What do you think of the looks of things?"

But the old man, awakening with a start from his chill and torpor, shook his head sadly, and on the face above his white goatee the resignation of glorious, fearless manhood was written. No, in an hour it would be all over! No crossing the tide-rip in a sea like that. You could take his word for that! In all his life he had never seen such a wind! But the Rector felt the strength for anything within him. "Well, if we can't get in, we'll hold off-shore, by God! and ride her out!" "No, you can't do that. There's going to be two days of it, at least. The boat might stand the seas, but you can't beat against this blow. If you try to coast along, you'll strike at Cullera, and if you get by there, you'll fetch up on the Cape. No, the one chance is running in. If it's dying, let's die near home, where so many of the boys have died, and in sight of the Christ of the Grao!" And *tio* Batiste, hitching around in the leashes that held him to the mast, got one hand into his shirt front, drew out a tarnished crucifix of bronze, and kissed it devoutly over and over again.

The old man's voice seemed to put spirit into the

other men. *"Cristo!* a pretty time for parson stuff!" Tonet jeered with a sepulchral laugh, and the two sailors began to curse at the old man with blasphemous obscenities. Danger, instead of crushing them, seemed to translate despair into raving impiety. The skipper shrugged his shoulders indifferently. A good Christian he was! If you didn't believe it, ask don Santiago. But he knew one thing, that the only Christ who would bring the *Mayflower* through that fix was *Pascualo el Retor,* and he might even do the trick if the damned boat minded her helm!

The proximity of shoal water was now quite apparent on the vessel. The combers had stopped coming in huge but fairly regular mountains from astern. A cross sea was running now, throwing a violent nasty chop back against the wind, and the water, piled up along the shore, was tumbling seaward in a gigantic undertow that broke to the surface in boiling seething whirlpools. The *Mayflower,* every timber in her sound and solid, creaked and strained in the new turmoil of conflicting forces. She was virtually unmanageable between the impact of the gale from astern and the water catching at her keel from forward and abeam. But though great waves were breaking over her from all directions, her hatches were firmly battened down, and nobly she struggled free each time. The Rector understood, however, that, caught now

in the tide-run off the Breakwater, there was no alternative but to try for the harbor.

The people on the rocks were now in plain sight. Spray could be seen dashing over them, and occasionally their anguished voices even reached as far as the *Mayflower's* deck. *Recristo!* To be drowned like rats in a trap, under the very eyes of your folks, and they unable to help you! Dog of a sea! Pig of a wind! And the Rector, to vent his impotent fury, spat at the waves, as the vessel reared and plunged this way and that, the scuppers under, clear to the hatch, first to starboard and then to port, the cross-yard shoving its point under at every roll.

"Look out! Look out!"

Now the death blows were beginning to come.

A wave of gray water, noiseless, and without a cap, reared above the stern, came full aboard without breaking, covered the whole boat, sweeping over her like a cuff from a gigantic hand. The Rector received the shock square on the back, but nothing, apparently, could loosen his iron grip from the tiller, nor pry his feet from the deck against which they were braced. He felt the water get deeper and deeper above his head, and a terrible groaning as if the boat were going to pieces under the strain. Then, as he came to the surface, an object, driven along by the wave like a cannonball, just grazed him.

It was the water-cask. The great roller had torn it from its frame, and was hurling it along the deck, crushing everything before it. It brushed Pascualet in the face, and blood spurted from the boy's nostrils. Then, like a giant sledge-hammer, it hurtled forward toward the foot of the mast where *tio* Batiste and the two sailors were. It was all as instantaneous as it was terrible. There was a cry. In spite of his courage in the face of terror, Pascualo could not stand this horrifying sight. With a groan of agony he buried his face in his hands. Like a mighty catapult, the barrel caught the youngest of the sailors on the head, and crushed him to pulp against the mast; and then, like an assassin running away with blood streaming from his hands, the heavy keg rolled into the scupper and overboard. Eddies of water coming along the deck, swept the mangled headless torso against the hands and faces of the other men, and washed blood and bits of flesh around over the planking.

Tio Batiste, his faltering lament sounding faintly through the storm, began to protest despairingly. God, could it not soon be over! Why torment honest sailors so? They had done no harm! "Let her go, Pascualo, let her go, for God's sake! Our time has come! Why fight and make us suffer so long?" But the Rector was not listening. His eyes were on the mast, where he remembered hear-

ing that terrible groaning sound, when he was under water. And, in fact, the pole had been fractured and was leaning alarmingly. At the peak he could still see the sheaf of grass that had been hung up there for the christening and the bunch of dry flowers that the hurricane was whipping about at the end of one last strand. *"Pare! Pare!"* Pascualet, his face covered with blood and terrified at the catastrophe he felt impending, was calling to his father to save him! But his father could do nothing. Keep her away from the worst one, perhaps, and prevent her from rolling over! As for doubling the Breakwater, he had given up hope of that!

And then . . . even the Rector gave a cry of terror.

The *Mayflower* was at the bottom of a great gully in the sea. From behind a huge roller of black shining water was curling; and a back-wave just as high was rushing the other way. The boat would be caught between them as they met.

It seemed minutes before it was over, though the crash was instantaneous. With a horrible crunching and wrenching of timber, the *Mayflower* went down into a great boiling cauldron; and when she came to the surface again, her deck was as level and clean as a scow's. The mast was off even with the flooring and had gone overboard, carrying sail, men and all. The Rector thought he saw the blanched

face of *tio* Batiste looking up at him out of the water for a second. Then that had gone. It was about over now!

As the *Mayflower* came up dismantled and helpless from her terrific ordeal, the throng on the Breakwater gave one great groan of agony. "They're lost! They're lost!" The cry was audible even to the men on board!

With her sail all gone, the boat no longer answered her helm. But Pascualo by frantic pulling to and fro succeeded in keeping her from drifting sideways before the wind. A chance wave swept the *Mayflower* over the rocks off the Breakwater. She did not touch, however, but drifted by so close that the Rector could recognize faces in the throng. What anguish! Able to reach them almost with your hand, able to hear them speak, and yet to be doomed! In a second the jetty was far astern. They would strike on the bars off Nazaret, and perish in the sands there that had been the graveyard of so many boats!

Tonet, who had been quite dazed by the repeated buffets from the water taken aboard, seemed to come to himself suddenly as the boat approached the Breakwater. It was a vision of life that gleamed in the darkness of his despair. No! He did not want to die! He would fight and fight to the last gasp. In the alternative of certain drowning in the undertow off Nazaret or of taking a chance among

the rocks on the Breakwater, he would take the chance. Hadn't he been famous as the best swimmer in the Cabañal?

On hands and knees, and at the risk of going overboard with the next wave, he crawled along from the rail to a hatch that had been torn off by a recent comber. He went down into the hold.

The Rector watched him contemptuously. No, he was not sorry he had gone out after all! It had been God's way of saving a good man from committing murder! In a few minutes he would perish with that traitor of a brother. As for Dolores, she might live! That would be the worst punishment for her! Was there a bigger fraud in the world than life? No—he knew what a cheat life was! Death, death was the only honest thing, the thing that keeps all its promises and never lies! Death and the treachery of the sea—two truths, the only two truths! For the sea lets a man rob her! She leads him on and on, till he loves her! And then, some fine day, crash! and it's over. And so on, from father to son, generation after generation!

Such thoughts passed in instantaneous, successive flashes through the Rector's mind, as though the imminence of death were whetting his dull intelligence.

But, as Tonet's head came up through the hatch again, Pascualo jumped to his feet on the rolling deck, and uttered an exclamation of surprise. His

brother had something in his hands. The life-preserver—the gift of *siñá* Tona to the *Mayflower*—which the Rector had laid away below and thereafter quite forgotten!

Tonet did not quaver at the stare of execration his brother gave him. "What are you going to do with that?" the Rector shouted.

"Going overboard! Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost! Think I'm going to drown here like a rat in a trap? No, sir, I'm going to take a chance!"

"The devil you are! You die with me, right here, and even then I don't know that we'll be square!"

In that supreme crisis, Tonet became again the harbor rowdy of his early boyhood, the ragamuffin stranger to respect and consideration for other people. He smiled ferociously, cynically, back at his brother.

Pale with hatred, the two men faced each other.

"Pare! Pare!" Pascualet again called faintly, tugging weakly at the lash that held him to the deck.

The Rector remembered that the child was there. Lowering, silent, grim, he let go the tiller, drew his knife from his belt, and cut the sash about the little fellow's waist.

"And now" . . . he said, "that life-belt!"

But Tonet made an obscene gesture, and started to put the jacket on.

"You dog!" Pascualo cried. "I must speak, at last, tell you what I think of you, in just two words! You thought you had fooled me! But it was you I chased last night through the streets of the village. You had been with that foul woman ashore there! I am not going to kill you, because we're going to die together. But this boy here—I used to call him my Pascualet—is not to blame. And I'm not going to let him die. He may get drowned, and that would be almost better for him! But he must have what chance there is! That life-belt, Tonet! For your own boy, the child of your treachery and disgrace! You're a dog, but you are also a father! Hand it over, or I'll cut your throat!"

Tonet smiled an atrocious, cynical smile.

"I don't say he's not mine. But it's everybody for himself!"

He had the life-belt almost on, but he was not quick enough to finish. His brother was upon him. There was a quick desperate struggle on that pitching, rolling, wave-washed deck.

Tonet fell on his back. Pascualo had sunk the knife twice into his side. The Rector's thirst for vengeance had been assuaged!

Blind, not knowing what he was about, he adjusted the life-belt to the boy's tiny form, picked

him up like a bundle of laths, walked astern, and threw him overboard. He saw him floating there for a second, till the crest of a great wave caught him.

It had all been the matter of minutes. The crowd on the point of the Breakwater saw the *Mayflower* drifting off entirely at the mercy of the storm. The rain suddenly had ceased, and the lightning-flashes were more distant now, though the gale still held furious, and the waves were coming even higher than before. The sailors could not tell, quite, what was going on on deck; but they saw the Rector throw a large bundle into the breakers, that lifted it up, and began to toss it shoreward, toward the rocks.

There was one last cry of horror.

The *Mayflower* had been caught abeam by a huge breaker, and was being turned end over end. She was seen for a second, bottom up, and then she sank, out of sight.

The women crossed themselves. Strong hands laid hold on *siñá* Tona and Dolores, to keep them from leaping into the sea.

Everybody had guessed what that bundle was, floating out there toward the shore. "The boy! The boy!" The sailors could see him now in the life-belt. But he would be smashed against the stones. The two women were screaming for help, though not knowing how it should come nor from

whom. Could not the child at least be saved! "The boy! The boy!"

A young man volunteered. To his sash he tied a line held in the hands of the men on shore. He jumped down to the low-lying rocks, and then farther out still, into the water. And he held himself there, against the boiling wash, by sheer strength and adroitness.

The little body came shoreward. It was thrown up against a sharp crag and then, to the dismay of the throng, torn loose by another wave.

At last the sailor got hold of it, as a breaker was about to dash it headlong against the wall.

Poor Pascualet! He was laid out on the muddy top of the Breakwater, his face covered with blood, his arms and legs cold and blue, the flesh cut and torn by the sharp edges of the rocks, his tiny form projecting from the big life-belt like a turtle from its shell. *Siñá* Tona tried to warm in her hands the little head whose eyes were closed forever. Dolores was kneeling at his side, digging her nails into her face, pulling frantically at her luxuriant beautiful hair, her eyes, of the glints of gold, rolling vacantly, wildly, in all directions, while piercing screams went out into space.

"Fill meu! Fill meu!"

To one side, in the crowd of weeping women, Rosario stood, the deserted, the childless wife, tearful in the presence of that anguished motherhood;

and from the bottom of her soul she forgave her rival.

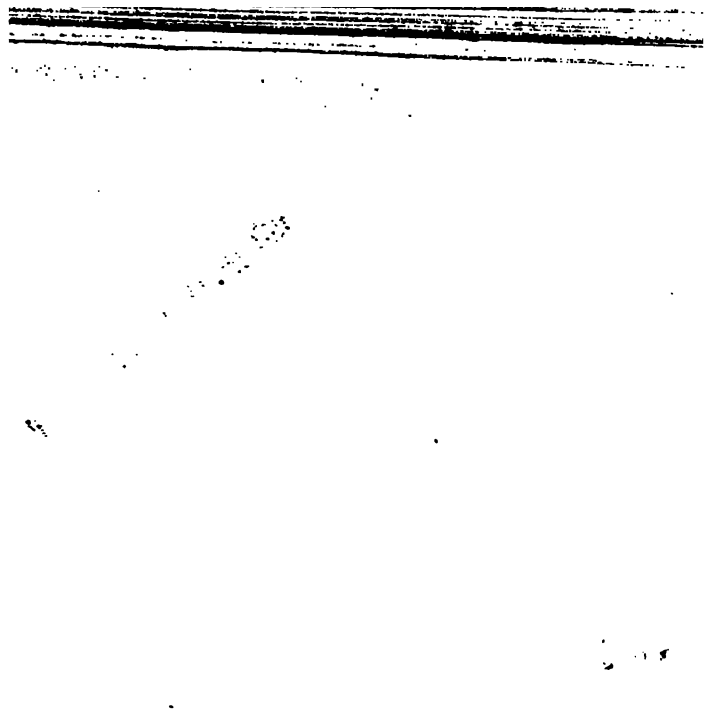
And on a rock, there, above them all, indomitable in the face of sorrow, proud and erect as Vengeance herself, towered the massive bony frame of *tia* Picores, her skirts lashing like pennons in the hurricane.

Her back was turned contemptuously toward the sea and the clenched fist she raised was menacing some one way off on shore there, where the *Miguelete* raised its sturdy mass above the housetops of Valencia.

That was the real killer of poor folks, there the real author of the catastrophe! And the sea-witch shook her rough deformed knuckles at the city, while streams of obscenities flowed from her cavernous mouth.

"And after this they'll come to the Fishmarket, the harlots, and beat you down, and beat you down! And still they'll say fish comes high, the scullions! And cheap 't would be at fifty, yes, at seventy-five a pound! . . ."

THE END



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